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THE AMBITIOUS LISTENER

BY

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PREFACE

This book resembles Cassius. It hath a lean and hungry look; it is a book about music without a note of music and without a picture.

Any reader who is not note-blind, if he desires any musical examples or citations at all, desires at least ten times as many as space-limitations would have allowed. Hence a companion volume in miniature piano score, with any and every measure easily findable because serially numbered, is available: *Masterpieces of Music in Pocket Piano Score*. That volume, uniform in size with this, contains every work discussed in this book.

The note-blind reader, who relies almost wholly on his ears, need not have read beyond our Table of Contents to find the implication that no ability to read music is presupposed. There are, however, few who are so incorrigibly note-blind as not to be able to acquire some ability to follow a performance from a piano score.

As for pictures, their only value could be to help to sell the book. The author is sure of that, because he knows the book. If pictures enough to attract a purchaser were inserted, the buyer would discover that the author had had to omit much of the text that the reader thought he was buying. Of course the reader, after finishing the book, may think that he has not had his money's worth; but the author is trying to forestall that situation by furnishing all examples in their full context in the above-mentioned pocket handbook, and by asking the reader to imagine those space-devouring pictures.

LEO RICH LEWIS.

Tufts College,
August, 1928.

PROSPECTS AND PERSPECTIVES

IN the Republic of Art, there is scarcely an ought; perhaps not even one. We have inklings of a Law—or of laws; but each citizen does his own legislating. Today he elects and follows an authority; tomorrow he casts his one individual vote, and that dignitary is out of office.

No citizen in the Republic of Art *ought* to like anything he does not want to like, or cannot help liking. If there are laws in Art, one of them decrees that nobody shall ever say “You ought to like that work.”

Many things, however, caution against following blindly any purely personal law. We notice, for example, that some of our friends like something which we do not like; and we are impelled to try our hand, so to speak, at liking it. Or, we like part of a piece of music, and wonder whether we might not come to like the rest of it. Or, we enjoy some of the works of a composer, and are curious as to our ability to enjoy others. Happily, in Music, individual and personal enjoyment does not interfere with another’s enjoyment (as it sometimes does in the case of a sequestered painting, for instance), and we are ethically quite free to follow our individual impulses.

Such are some of the considerations which may kindle the ambition to become a more successful listener. This book is primarily an offering of suggestions as to methods of gratifying that ambition. Its value is to be measured

solely by its success in increasing enjoyment, certainly not by any justification of established standards nor by any attempt to set up new standards.

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Many have presented answers to the query: "What is Music?" We need not select from them nor try to add to them, as our present purpose is the purely practical one of making more enjoyable the music which we choose to hear. For us, a serviceable answer to that query can be: "Music is what you hear, and what you make it mean to you." The simplest as well as the most reliable test that something has meaning for us is, that it so engrosses our attention that we do not wish to think about something else; and, if the work under observation is, for us, a really great work, we simply cannot think about anything else.

Now it happens that many persons seem to value music in proportion to its power to make them think about something else. Many articles--and perhaps some books--on Music Appreciation appear to seek to make music more suggestive of people and objects, of actions and events; of what one may describe or relate in words. We are not trying to increase that kind of literature. Rather, we accept as conclusive the evidence of hosts of efficient listeners who aver that, in listening to music, they think of nothing but the music.

We count listening to great music as a fulfilment, not as an incitement; as an experience, not as an occurrence; as an event, not as an incident. We count life amid great music as a delving into mystery, not as a period between

dates; as an adventure, not as a journey; as a career, not as a business.

* * * *

One highly efficient professional listener* has praised the listening of a certain amateur by recording that, although "his thought goes off on a tangent now and then as soon as he realizes it, he recalls it." Accepting these words as conclusively significant, one may say that this book is an effort to suggest means of self-help toward Organizing the Individual Attention.

* * * *

The road toward efficient listening is not sandpapered. One cannot slide, or coast, or be driven "in high" to greater enjoyment. None of the world's real treasures may be attained without effort. The candidate for listenership will steadily climb on foot, occasionally stopping to rest, to survey; to orient himself for further ascent. But the period of conscious effort is not of unlimited duration. There is an altitude of maturity of power which the climber attains: his own personal altitude, where conscious effort ceases and where subconscious development can begin. New vistas are perceived: some lower, perhaps, as to elevation, but hitherto not duly or fully esteemed as to beauty or significance; others higher, inviting inspection; still others whose comparative elevation is less noticeable than their scope. The observer merely proceeds, at his convenience and leisure, toward further view of these. His listening physique automatically meets demands. Interest begets interest. His

*Ernest Newman in the London *Sunday Times*, September 11, 1927. If there is such a thing as an inspired listener, Mr. Newman seems to be one.

character—which, in this case, means his receptive sensitivity—is adult.

* * * *

We may not find room to deal adequately with music written wholly or partly for voices. That is not regrettable, since preparation for listening to such music is amply secured through observation of instrumental music. On the other hand, much familiarity with vocal music seems often to be a handicap in the observation of instrumental music. Historically, it is certain that vocal development since 1600 has shown liberal imitation of instrumental style. Except in the case of some folksongs, more especially of the ballad type, music for the voice is conceived for the voice as an instrument, not for the voice as an emotionalized utterer of words. Frequently music with an uncomprehended text is understood and enjoyed to the full, as music. Occasionally it is wiser to disregard the words entirely.

It is, then, safe as well as economical to devote our attention exclusively—or nearly so—to purely instrumental music.

* * * *

It is important that the individual observer establish a general background for his observations, unless he has it already. Here it is not easy to give definite specifications, but it is not difficult to show what is meant. We may begin by saying that the acquisition of information, as information, is of no importance, though just as unobjectionable as cross-word-puzzling or any other in-door sport. The dates of Buxtehude's birth and death, for instance, are of no importance, except perhaps that we note that John Sebastian

Bach was in his early twenties when Buxtehude died. The fact that Bach walked fifty miles to hear Buxtehude play is interesting; it is important to us only because we judge that Bach found it important to hear Buxtehude,—and not even then, unless it kindles a desire to hear something which Bach might have heard at the goal of his fifty-mile jaunt. If we can find an organist who has taken the trouble to prepare, from a thoroughly seasoned collection of seventeenth-century masterpieces, a work of Buxtehude, it will certainly be worth while to attend the recital where it is played. We shall do something that shows that we have at least two kinds of background if, at the end of the recital, we seek out the organist, thank him for playing the work, and leave with him a self-addressed postcard with the request that, if convenient, he let us know when he is to play it again.

This supposed case is typical of what is meant by “establishing a background.” (In relating it, there was no thought of the pleasantries which now lies at hand: it will also help to establish a Bach-ground.) Each individual must establish his own, gradually and by various means, on the basis of interest in compositions. Also by reading. Something about the lives of the greatest composers—Bach, Haydn, Rameau, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, Schumann, Wagner—and of the greatest performers—Domenico Scarlatti, Bordoni-Hasse, Viardot-Garcia, Paganini, Liszt—is worth knowing; not as information but as a means of heightening and clarifying knowledge of compositions and as a guide toward wider appreciation of mastery in all phases of the art. Books by gifted and discerning

listeners are especially worth reading. In this field, we may begin with Berlioz, Schumann, Wagner, Saint-Saëns, skipping passages which suggest verbal interpretation, and re-reading passages that treat of musical values. After a modicum of that kind of reading, one's own discretion will be a surer guide to selection from recent publications than the laudatory statements of publishers, or the blame or praise of book reviewers.

It might even be said that the difficulty of selection is purely imaginary, once the habit of such reading is acquired. But how acquire the habit? Here experience may give answer: five hours a week devoted to reading, at will, from general histories of music, groups of essays, cyclopedias such as those of Grove and Riemann,—that is, of the well-edited and continuously re-edited kind,—brief biographies, handbooks of musical terms, musical magazines that are not noticeably picture books, catalogs and announcements of leading publishing houses of the United States, England, France, and Germany,—five hours a week for one year will establish the habit. Incidentally, there will no longer be discomfiture or embarrassment in the presence of enlightened conversation about music; and, after the year's weekly stint is accomplished, reading can be *ad libitum*.

It is with intention that we send the beginner on an almost uncharted voyage. Prescribed reading-courses, club-lists, five-foot shelves and the like, have been amply tried. We have seen one enthusiast for self-culture undertake to read a musical lexicon *seriatim*, only to find, having arrived at letter D, that the human mind doesn't assimilate things

alphabetically. It used to be said that four years' frequentation of a college's buildings was in itself a liberal education; and we are saying substantially the same thing—confirmed, by the way, by three decades of experience—that a year's frequentation of standard works on music will establish the habit of reading about music. If the Ambitious Listener doesn't find the habit acquired in that time, his progress toward efficiency in listening is likely to be slowed up, as there will be indication that his assimilative powers are quantitative rather than qualitative; and that his discriminative powers may be similar to those of the listener who confessed, paraphrasing a once popular saying: "All tunes look alike to me."

* * * *

We are not yet quite through with the question of background. Let us consider a sequel to the Bach-Buxtehude episode.

If, after a second hearing of the Buxtehude work, we see no "point" to it, a just conclusion is that we still lack the necessary background, and we make a mental note to "return to the attack" a year or so later. The task of the Ambitious Listener is to become sensitive to the composition. That does not mean that he should forthwith familiarize himself with a dozen of Buxtehude's works; only a musicologist or a faddist or very progressive organist would do that. It merely means that he bear the work in mind as a convenient test of progress in the realm of organ composition. Test-works must be first-class affairs; and the

presence of this work in what we have called a seasoned* collection of masterpieces is simple and conclusive evidence that it "belongs." The Ambitious Listener's task is to become sensitized to that kind of thing.

* * * *

The Listener may, if he chooses, adopt Napoleon's mental technique. That supremely efficient person said about himself: "Different things to be thought about and different things to be done are arranged in my head as in a set of drawers. If I want to drop a subject, I close its drawer and open another. Things don't get mixed up; and they never bother nor tire me. If I want to sleep, I close all the drawers, and off I go." One drawer in the Ambitious Listener's mental office-furniture can be labelled: Test-Works. The Buxtehude work may belong there for a while.

* * * *

And now another incident, not supposed but actual.

On three consecutive Sunday evenings early in 1928, at the Boston Public Library, there were concerts by nationally or internationally celebrated string quartets and by a group of competent local amateur players. Admission was free. Hundreds of persons were turned away from the concerts by the celebrated players, but the hall was not filled for the concert by the amateur group. This amateur group presented the following program: Purcell, *Two Four-Part Fantasias*; Händel, *Sonata in G Minor for Two*

*What is a seasoned collection? One which has been mentioned for a generation in all *brief* selective bibliographies, or appears as Number One in all comprehensive lists. It is generally issued by one of the internationally known publishers, or under approval of some group of experts. It invites the commercial assurance that "we have something just as good."

Violins; Beethoven, *Serenade, Opus 8, for Violin, Viola, and Violoncello*; Locatelli, *Trio for Two Violins and Violoncello*. Purcell (1658-1695) is generally rated as England's greatest composer. His String Fantasias had only recently been published in a popular edition and none had ever been publicly played in Boston. As for the Beethoven Trio, a work of great inherent and historical interest, it had not been programmed in Boston for forty years. While the two professional programs showed excellent choice from all traditional standpoints, neither approached the program above-cited in importance for the music-lover, either connoisseur or amateur. We are not suggesting that either of the professional quartets should have played this program; but we are suggesting that the audience at the amateur concert might properly have included all those who had any good reason for attending the professional concerts.

All of which brings us to a consideration of the ultimate purpose of getting a background: the attainment of perspective, a perspective which can enable us to choose the things which will give us not merely the most intense enjoyments but also the most lasting. If there is one item of world wisdom more significant than all others, it is this: that the real values in life lie not in temporal things. Man has stored in the Arts his non-temporal treasures, his real values; and one manifests merely common sense and ordinary thrift, not at all idealism, in devoting effort toward getting possession of those real values. As we have already said, this is not easy. We have mentioned some of the difficulties; but there are others, and very great ones, which the Ambitious Listener has to remove or surmount.

PREPARING TO BEGIN

MUCH of the influence thrown about the student or music-lover tends to distort perspective. Music magazines bring photographic glorifications of performing artists. Billboards everywhere exalt individual celebrities. Reports of handsome financial returns kindle the imagination, and money earned is even thought to be a trustworthy measure of musicianship. The frantic applause of hundreds or thousands is an impressive thing.

It would be easy to wax satirical in the presence of such current phenomena, the only novel feature of which is magnitude; but, becoming satirical, one could hardly remain judicial. The Ambitious Listener will naturally wish to hear a celebrated artist once. After that, attendance can depend on the works chosen for performance. If the student knows any of these works well, he can then profit by the artist's greatness or have a basis for enjoyment of his artistry. Here again, each hearer will seek to develop power to form his own estimate of the value and significance of many externals of concert life; not forgetting, however, that it is the worth of the composition performed which, through the generations (and hence for the individual contemporary ultimately) decides permanent values, both as to composer and as to performing artist.

* * * *

There is another not inconsiderable hindrance to the

development of individual enjoyment; the belief that whatever is in print about music—especially if in a book or signed by a person of repute—is true, or important if true. We bring no general accusation of unreliability of writers on music, nor any claim that this book is more reliable than another. We do, however, proffer the remark that book-publishing, journalism, and “magazinism” (not to mention syndication) long since reached a degree of proliferation and proliferation which made it impossible to muster a supply of editors who could exercise intelligent supervision of the product, of authors who could afford to restrict themselves to subjects which they had mastered, or even of proof-readers who could handle efficiently what was going through the press.

We recall an almost savage dictum of an educator. A student had just said: “I read in an article in the Sunday Blank that, etc.” The instructor’s reply was: “Don’t believe anything you see or hear, especially if it is in print.”

Again, everything is made to sell; and should be so made, if for no other reason than that nobody can prevent its being so made. And, among other things that sell, a famous signature is to be counted. In fact, there are persons whose signature has cash value, and who will sell that signature to be affixed to articles which reach the public without having been seen by the alleged author.

* * * *

These conditions, and other confusions and complexities, bring difficulties for the on-coming student. How may he arrive at truth? Where lies trustworthy authority?

Direct answer is impossible; fortunately it is not neces-

sary; still more fortunately, it is undesirable. We thus seem to be saying (as it were, authoritatively) that authorities are, for the Ambitious Listener, superfluous; which is the case. The Ambitious Listener needs guide-posts toward goals of his own choosing. His first need, then, is to be able to read guide-posts discriminatingly.

Facts and opinions are the output of authorities. If facts were of importance, the Listener might need authorities; but facts are not important. Indeed, if some facts are sought (as, for instance: did Mozart write his *Requiem*?), it will be found to be a matter of opinion. (Or perhaps Mozart, like any other musical person, was never quite the same man again after having gotten, two years before his death, his first real insight into the polyphony of John Sebastian Bach.) When Mr. Newman discussed at length the question "Was Richard Wagner a Jew?" he happened not to have noticed that Mr. Sonneck had definitely proven that Wagner was not a Jew. As for opinions, it is a truism that there are no "correct" ones. Some embody more wisdom than others; and there are some seasoned opinions—seasoned by three or more generations of persistence among connoisseurs—which it is worth while for the Ambitious Listener to try to make his own. These seasoned opinions are the Ambitious Listener's handiest examination-test of himself. For instance, the day when he discovers himself to be aware that Beethoven's *Sixth Symphony* is less interesting than the *Third*,—on that day the Ambitious Listener can promote himself to the next grade. Promotion day to Junior High would come when he personally sees the point of the following colloquy:

Jimmy says: "Which is the greatest of Beethoven's Symphonies?"

Billy replies: "The one I heard last."

We are trying to emphasize the fact that an ounce of one's own insight is of more value than a ton of borrowed impressions. Whatever may be true in science or economics or civics or ethics, in art a "wrong" personal opinion is of more value to its holder than a "correct" adopted opinion, and infinitely more valuable than no opinion at all. (Please note that we say "holder," not "utterer;" we are urging nobody to express opinions.) The listener who believes that Beethoven's Symphonies are all right enough in their way, but wishes that Wagner had done a whole lot more toward fixing up the orchestration of them, is no fool, —unless perhaps he has decided to stop listening to Beethoven Symphonies. He will probably find it easy to believe that there is such a thing as the *historical* ear, which automatically shuts out post-Beethoven (or post-Bach) orchestration as occasion demands. And, if he is an Ambitious Listener, he will experiment on the development of that kind of hearing The player-piano enthusiast who heartily wished for a chance to give Wilhelm Gericke, Conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, "a few points on how to play Beethoven's *Third Symphony*" is far better off than the season-ticket holder of many years who would not even be aware whether the repeat-mark in the first movement was heeded by the conductor; or who—to give further examples—would not notice the omission, by a couple of four-hand players, of the periods of silence which are Measures 43 and 226 in the First Movement of *Mozart's G*

Minor Symphony, and Measures 57 and 301 in the First Movement of Beethoven's *Fifth*.

It might seem that we are endeavoring to exalt self-sufficiency; our real object is to give the plain citizen in the Republic of Art the hope that he can get vitally important features by and for himself. Among other things, for instance, he will discover that there is no magic in the analysis of form. Perhaps he will some day meet a person—they are legion—who can glibly analyze master-works but has not the slightest appreciation of musical values. Analysis can render service in speeding the time when a work gets so fully into the mind that all except subconscious recognition of its form disappears. But one who responds with a maximum of his receptivity to a masterwork may regard himself as the best authority, for him, as to its form. We do not mean that he shut eyes and ears to suggestions from others. Wiser eye has wider vision. We do, however, mean that, unless outside comments result in heightening his personal enjoyment of the work, they have, for him, no value, and may be totally disregarded. No "authority" need tempt him to imagine the work different from what, on complete acquaintance with its tonal subject-matter, it justifies itself, to him, as being.

* * * *

The power to begin to have one's own opinion comes from complete familiarity with a not necessarily large number of representative works. Before 1900, and certainly before 1890, only very few persons could attain this complete familiarity; and, even with this fortunate few, the attainment might be long delayed. It was essential to have

either a high degree of technical musicianship, or adequate wealth and leisure to command, and to profit by, the musicianship of others. But the advent of the automatic player brought sweeping changes. Later, the talking-machine and, still later, radio-broadcasting brought their ever-increasing flood of contributions to facilities for hearing music. It is quite safe to say that a familiarity with great music which, in 1885, would have cost its possessor, including travelling and hotel expenses to and in the Old World, not less than ten thousand dollars, may now be had, in a few months, without leaving home, for fifty dollars. The cheaper familiarity will, of course, not be identical with the dearer, in the getting of which there was certainly a great deal of very delightful experience; but, for purely musical purposes the fifty-dollar outfit may be quite as serviceable to its possessor. And, if the listener of today happens to be able to spend, say, two thousand dollars, he can acquire in a year a basis of enjoyment which would have cost a decade of time and not less than twenty-five thousand dollars in the 'seventies and 'eighties. In this case, while the cost of living has gone up, the cost of enjoyment has come down.

* * * *

The classification of music as a language is, in a way, unfortunate. That may prompt us to seek in it something corresponding to parts of speech; or we may be led to believe that somehow its vital essence may be transmuted into words. Music has certainly the characteristics of a discourse: it occupies time; its expression appears to have not merely continuity but also consistency. We need not, however, be surprised that music's message, whatever it may

be, can be embodied only in music; for we note that devotees of painting and sculpture assure us that the vital features of those arts are quite independent of the subjects treated.

Music differs from the other arts, however, in that the "subject treated" is indefinable. Subject and treatment are, as it were, blended into expression. Then, too, the whole thing is the invention of man. There is no parallel of man's music in the sounds of nature, as there is a parallel of a portrait or of a statue in living creatures and inanimate objects. Perhaps for this reason music is often spoken of as indefinite; and, in the minds of some, that indefiniteness is a weakness.

The meaning of any musical work may be indefinable: but is it therefore indefinite?

You have an intimate friend whom you have known and loved for years. Would you expect to be able, no matter what means of communication you used or how long you tried, to give a third person a definite idea of what that friend is or means to you? Certainly not; and yet, if anybody should say that your friend is an indefinite person, or that your knowledge and affection are indefinite, you would of course not agree. Knowledge and esteem of your friend can be gained by another only as yours was gained, by prolonged acquaintance. Even then, they will not be the same as your knowledge and esteem; for, being yourself, your perceptions have yourself as a basis. Your friend can do nothing about the matter except to be from day to day and year to year the same expressive individual.

So with a work of music. It is what it is. Unlike a human creature, age has no effect on it. Even various interpreters cannot change its essence. Different hearers may have different impressions of it (if it is significant enough to keep on finding hearers); but for every experienced hearer the work itself will be perfectly definite and the impression will be perfectly definite. This is clearly shown by the fact that the slightest change of note, chord, or accent, or any considerable change of speed, will immediately be noticeable to such a hearer. In the case of surpassingly great works, three or four generations old, there is substantial concurrence of impression among all experienced hearers, though the embodiment of the same in words may vary greatly.

If, then, our study is to be fruitful, it must busy itself with music as music, notwithstanding possible handicaps. We must try to observe how music expresses itself in its own terms. We must face the baffling simplicity of the phenomenon itself: that the imagination of human creatures has found means of blending elements of sound into significant unitary wholes, occupying limited spaces of time; that the charm of the whole or any part is indefinable; that when anyone has found, for himself, engrossing significance in any series or combination of sound elements, he has reached the limit of essential knowledge of that series or combination; that the passage of time or the broadening or deepening of his own experience may bring new significance for him; that no interpretation in other terms than music can have any authorization to displace his own

personal, immediate reaction to the series or combination as a purely musical entity.

* * * *

It is ordinarily said that music has three elements: Rhythm, Melody, Harmony. There is a fourth element which may well be included: Embodiment. We mention this element (which can be regarded as including all the means, human and inanimate, of performance) for reasons which, we hope, will become justified. For the present, summoning the thought that music seems to be a blend of subject-matter, treatment, and expression, we offer another thought: that, during the whole development of the art, the procedure of composers has been influenced, or perhaps even actually determined, by the available means of rendition. If style must (and of course it must) be studied, or even merely observed with understanding, account must be taken of the instruments and players familiar to the composer. Unless the pianoforte is taken into account, for instance, there can be no intelligent comparison of Beethoven with Chopin; nor can Chopin be studied without reference to anybody else. One might as well expect to observe with understanding the architectural contrasts between the Duomo in Florence and a twentieth century monumental structure without taking into account the technique of concrete and steel.

A closer inspection of music's elements is, then, desirable. We need not, indeed, delve into physics to examine the raw materials of tone. At the end of his monumental work on *The Sensations of Tone*, the great Helmholtz recognizes that, in studying "rhythm, forms of composition,

and means of musical expression, . . . the properties of sensual perception would of course have an influence at times, but only in a very subordinate degree." In that field of study the aim would be, he says, "to explain the wonders of great works and to learn the utterances and actions of the various affections of the mind." In our tiny treatment of works of art, we shall thus find distinguished approval of our disregard of physics. Composers and performers deal with tones, not with vibration-ratios. The use of differential and combinational tones may influence embodiments, but not ideas. As for the scale itself, Helmholtz seems to have proven that it is not the result of natural laws but of a selection made by man from the complete range of audible pitches.

Nevertheless, it will occasionally be desirable to remind ourselves that the creative artist deals with things more elemental than rhythm, melody, and harmony. We therefore mention, as ultimate elements of the art, for all practical purposes:

Degrees of loudness, volume of individual and combined tones, differences of force in tones simultaneously and serially uttered, and related features; which we may classify under the general heading of.....POWER;

Various speeds, maintained and modified, and similar features; which we may classify under the general heading of PACE;

The collection of tones of the gamut, adapted to human use by chosen scales, and employed serially in melody, simultaneously in harmony; which we may classify under the general heading of.....PITCH;

Regularly and irregularly recurrent accents, combined in perceptible groups or set in contrast to imagined groups; all being derivatives of Power, but conveniently classified separately under the general heading of.....PULSE;

Resources of instrumental and vocal embodiment and resultant characteristics of style, musical architectonics, manners, mannerisms and techniques of interpretation and performance as well as facilities, difficulties and inhibitions* of the same, and similar features; all of which may be classified under the general heading of PURVEYANCE.

Our summarized enumeration of the materials of music, if we wish to make it alphabetical as well as alliterative, may then read: Pace, Pitch, Power, Pulse, Purveyance. We shall not, however, immediately make use of all details of this enumeration; nor are we undertaking to "systematize" our treatment of the subject on a formal basis. The value and significance of this classification will, we hope, gradually become apparent.

*One cannot intelligently listen to Beethoven's orchestral works without awareness of the inhibitions of trumpets and horns without vents.

ABOUT MUSIC THAT EVERYBODY UNDERSTANDS

THERE is a fanciful story that used to go the rounds in the days when Greek was a universally required subject for entrance to college:

“Back in 400 B.C. there was a certain captain in the Greek army by the name of Xenophon, to whom fell the task of leading a retreat of ten thousand men. He was a gifted writer and decided to relate the story of the retreat. But an incidental thought occurred to him: ‘In two thousand years or so Greek will be a dead language. It will, however, on account of many remarkable qualities, be held in high esteem as a staple cultural subject, and there will be hosts of school-pupils throughout the world who will need a text for the study of it. While I am writing my account, I will take pains to make a book which will bring in all the necessary material for the study of Greek syntax; will introduce as many words as possible which can be used as types for declension and conjugation; and will restrict my general vocabulary, as far as possible, to the words in common use.’ Xenophon’s *Anabasis* was the result.”

In similarly fanciful way, it might be imagined that the young Beethoven, as he was at work on the *Larghetto* of his *Second Symphony*, said to himself: “In writing this movement, I will make provision for an ideal example of the elementary essentials of music, and will introduce vital

features of the art in attractive form, so that this work may serve as a standard composition for those who seek to lay a foundation for intelligent listening to music."

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We are, of course, not saying that another work by another composer might not be as serviceable; or, for some hearers, perhaps better. Lest arbitrariness of judgment be suspected, we mention the First Movement of either Mendelssohn's "*Italian*" or of Brahms's *Second* as finely available specimens; and, incidentally, as works which the on-coming listener may put, as early as he chooses, on his Memory List. The Beethoven movement may, however, be chosen for the following reasons: it is succinct and direct in its exemplification of basic usages; it is long enough to offer a task of sustained attention; it still appears on concert programs, both "classical" and popular, and is likely to be heard on radio programs; two-hand piano arrangements and four-hand piano arrangements (whether for player-piano or for manual use) present it very well; and, most important of all, it brings a goodly number of melodious and well individualized themes and treats them in an ample variety of ways.

We cannot too strongly emphasize the fact that the on-coming listener needs to develop at once the power of sustained attention. Some treatises on our subject begin with the study of folk-songs or of little piano pieces. That is probably desirable under some class-room conditions; and it can be made to seem plausible as to means and method, if one is relying on theory or form-study or "system" as a justification of procedure. But we are taking for

granted that the listener is not a child any more, and that he has ambition and patience. Above all, we are at all points taking advantage of what decades of practical experience have shown to be possible and desirable. Furthermore, as to the present matter, we may expect to find that the study of details can be carried on while details are being observed as elements of an extended work instead of by themselves, detached or single.

* * * *

We shall deal with the Beethoven *Larghetto* as a compendium of Themes and their Treatment,—or, as is more generally said, their Development; for we shall presently be asking the listener to regard Thematic Development as basic to all musical discourse. We shall make, as it were, a personally conducted tour of discovery of typical materials and methods of musical composition.

The first eight measures of this work bring a melody which we may call the Hymn-Theme, though a trill begins Measure 3. This trill is, itself, a specimen of Development by Ornamentation. M8* carries us scale-wise toward a repetition of the same eight-measure melody; this time, however, in a different register and with a different tone-color. We have, then, a specimen of Development by Change of Color. During this repetition we become aware of a note (E) persistently repeated “off the beat.” This note gradually assumes more prominence, at M12 by greater insistence, at M14 by a new rhythmical figure; and finally, at M15-M16 it generates something which attains the individuality of a musical idea. The composer, in associating

*We shall regularly use the abbreviation M, without period after it, for the word Measure, when a number follows.

this unassuming idea with his theme, has given us an ideal elementary specimen of Development by Association,—that is, one musical idea associated with another musical idea. As we leave M16, we begin what turns out to be the second part of our Hymn-Theme, simply stated. During its repetition, with Change of Color, M24-M32, the iterated E is still at work, seizing a moment for display in M26, and actually becoming coördinate with the Hymn-Theme in M28-M32. At once a Skipping Theme appears (M33-M34), generating itself, as it were, out of its first four notes. In this generating process we get a specimen of Development by Imitation; but we shall get clearer specimens in other works. By the way, if we think of this four-note idea as the generator of something, we should call it a Motive (or, as it is sometimes spelled in French fashion, a Motif). There is a reply, with Change of Color. M37 brings a specimen of Development by Change of Mode (major for minor), and, a beat later, a six-note associate (some E's with a side-note F) arrives. The Skipping Theme is of incidental nature, as is also the loud Full-Chord Theme which comes in M41-M42. The same, softly and with Change of Color, is in M43-M44. M45 is broadly typical: it *does something with one detail of a theme*. The two chords of M42 are a detail of the Full-Chord Theme, and M45 is a perfect specimen of Development by Detail-Work. M46 and the first beat of M47 seize the two-chord phrase forcibly and use it for a purpose which we halt for a moment to characterize.

At various points thus far we have noticed inflections in the musical discourse corresponding to voice-inflections

which, if recorded in print, would call for marks of punctuation. Review Measures 4, 8, 12, 16, 18, 20, 24, 26, 28, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 45, and note such points; or if, in reviewing, you find that you prefer not to punctuate, as it were, at all those points, follow frankly your own preference. Take all music, in this and similar respects, in the way in which you like it best. Such preferences are the distinguishing marks of personal conception and interpretation. You will, however, certainly find some points of division or pause; and, for our present purpose, it is sufficient that they be identified as Cadential Effects. Inasmuch as no one can be an intelligent listener without being sensitive to such effects, it is well to observe them consciously for a while. Soon this observation will become automatic.

In M46 Beethoven uses a detail of the Full-Chord Theme to make a pronounced cadential effect, which, in this case, might call for a colon, rather than a period, if we were punctuating. M48-M50 bring the Smooth Theme. M51 "carries on." M52-M54, including of course the first beat of M55, show the same theme varied. In naming Development by Variation we use a standard technical term for the first time. When a theme is ornamented or rhythmically animated after the manner of M50-M53, so that one can hear, so to speak, the plain theme *through* the modified version, we have what is technically known as Variation. At M55 the Rhythm-Contrast Theme is heard,—named in recognition of its salient feature. It includes, at M58-M59, a four-note phrase to which Beethoven, beginning at M66 of the restatement, gives noticeable Development by Detail-

Work, as far as M72 inclusive. Again we pause for special comment.

* * * *

It may be that the statement "Rhythm is one of the elements of music" offers sound, rather than light, to the Ambitious Listener; and he seeks light: which means that he wants to know what connection that fact has with his appreciation of music. M66-M72 gives us an opportunity to tell him. We wish that the explanation might be briefer; but a thing so fundamental to all appreciation should of course become as clear as we can manage to make it.

Among the things which the listener does for the composer is to set up within himself the regular procession of group-wise organized pulses which make the basic rhythm of the piece. It is habitual with classical composers to state and amply confirm, at once, this basic rhythm. Composers who do not do this (see Schumann's *Manfred Overture* or Brahms's *Third Symphony*) strike their contemporaries as erratic, or as abstruse, or as otherwise peculiar; and it sometimes takes a generation or more to establish as customary a very slight enlargement of the rhythmical vocabulary. Incidentally, among suggestions for the Ambitious Listener we place the suggestion to school himself in "setting" rhythm; for he can hope to make no progress with significant music until his "technique of rhythm-setting" is both definite and plastic. More about this later.

Beethoven II-2 (like Mendelssohn's *Italian-I* and Brahms II-1) offers no problem; it merely exemplifies what we are saying. Indeed, our Beethoven work demonstrates it with ideal directness and simplicity in the Hymn-Theme.

Now, there is universal concurrence in the statement that the entire emotional content of music lies in Rhythm, not at all in its dealing with pitch as an element of Melody and Harmony; and even Dissonance, so often thought of as embodying emotion, attains emotionality only by being superposed, so to speak, on Rhythm. Coming now to our Beethoven piece, we may note that, up to M60 or so, Beethoven has been seasoning it with variety in rhythm, but has done nothing exciting. Beginning, however, with the first beat of M69, he sets his two-beat phrase, already five times stated (M59, 60, 66, 67, 68), in six repetitions into the three-beat rhythm of the work. Here we have opportunity to state exactly what the Ambitious Listener will prepare himself to do in an infinite number of cases if he is to enjoy master-music,—which, by the way, is no more than what anybody will do if he is to enjoy master-verse, or even master-prose, in his own language. He will not become rhythmically confused or give his attention a vacation until the next “tune” arrives; but will maintain within himself the steady march of the fundamental three-pulse rhythm of the piece and allow Beethoven the opportunity to give him emotional excitement or incitement. Thus alone will he get any thrill out of the passage; and, if he already gets a thrill, it is because he does unconsciously what we are now suggesting that he do consciously, if only to accommodate us by a bit of good sportsmanship in playing the game. Let him make this point perfectly clear to himself by starting his one-two-three (perhaps audibly) during the Smooth Theme, and continuing it unchanged until the first beat of M73, where he will find himself “back on the track” of

steady rhythmical progress at the Full-Chord-and-After-Phrase Theme, which fills M73-M76 and resolves itself into a piquant cadence in M77, only to be carried on through M78 and restated, tossed about with rhythmical iteration, in M79-M81. This whole passage is an ideally direct, simple, typical, and conclusive specimen of what is involved in the statement that "Rhythm is one of the elements of music;" and we have taken pains to present it fully on the principle that definition by presentation is better than definition by representation or description,—that the most serviceable and effective way to define a horse is to point out a horse.

* * * *

During this rhythmic play we find another method of Thematic Development: by Reversal. Associated with the downward proceeding four-note theme, comes, in the bass of M68, the upward proceeding same theme. In M72, this becomes the melody. Any such modification of a theme—anything which might be called a "backwards" type, down for up, up for down, fore for aft, aft for fore—we call Reversal. This is to be distinguished from Inversion, which is a technical musical term, later to be explained. At M82-M85 we have a Catchy Theme, which is again presented, with Change of Color, in M87-M89. From M90 to M99 inclusive, we have a varied series of cadential effects which point off, with deliberate emphasis, this portion of the work, and mark the end of the First Section (or Division) of the composition. M98-M99 carry on.

The Second Section begins at M100. This, the Development Section, is devoted to new treatment of some of

the themes heard in the First Section, often named the Exposition. A detail of the Hymn-Theme, treated by Change of Mode, with associated nimble scale-passages in M101 and M103, fills M101-M103. Then, by Change of Key and Change of Mode, the same detail has similar but richer treatment in M104-M107.

In M108 we find another richly suggestive item. It is typical of innumerable cases which justify or explain Mozart's remark that "it is easy to write notes, but difficult to write rests," and also adds confirmation to our recent emphasis on the requirement of the hearer to furnish the basic continuous inner rhythm for the composer to work with. Beethoven begins to deal, in this M108, with the first phrase of the Hymn-Theme, but minus its first note. An epitomatic example of the significance of silence! And the hearer must furnish the basic rhythm in order to get a premonition of the impressiveness which the composer now feels himself ready to seek. Around this thematic nucleus he constructs a dramatic passage which maintains a demand, the largest continuous demand in this piece, on the listener's attention, until the first chord of M138. And, with striking adaptation of means to end, he employs rhythm to give emotional intensity and to build climax. M110 and M112 show Development by Rhythm-Intensification. Development by Reversal appears in M109-M111. M117 brings Development by Change of Key. In M113-M114 and M124-M125 rhythm alone finds a direct expression, preparing for the sub-climax of each pair of following measures. In M127 further Rhythm-Intensification sets in. Development by Stretto (beginning a restatement of a theme before

its current statement is complete) is employed. In M136-M137 the intensified rhythm drives onward to the climax. In the treatment of the Rhythm-Contrast Theme, M139-M147, we find Development by Inversion: that which was the upper voice in M139-M141 becomes the lower in M142-M147, and vice versa. Blending rhythm with kaleidoscopically resolving chords, Beethoven brings us to M155, where an apt four-measure cadence leads to the beginning of the Third Section at M158.

M158-M165 are like M1-M8, except that the accompaniment resembles that of M9-M16. On the repetition, however, M166-M173, a new associate appears, which might conceal the main melody, had not Beethoven discreetly reserved it until the Hymn-Theme was thoroughly familiar,—or perhaps needed a little fresh seasoning. The next eight measures show (first beat of M175 and of M177) a neat little specimen of Development by Rhythm-Modification, where the bass, as it were, stubs its toe engagingly. M182-M189 show the same modificational features as M166-M173. Similar enrichments, by reduplication of a detail of the Skipping Theme, characterize M198-M204, while Change of Key brings us to a new use for the material from M94-M95, elaborated, confirmed, and reharmonized in M204-M208, rhythmically intensified in M209, as an introduction to the Smooth Theme, now in the key of the piece. This time the Full-Chord Theme of M41-M44 does not appear. A nimble little two-note associate, which dances across the Variation of the Smooth Theme (M216-M218), and which has to be omitted in the two-hand piano version, now comes more clearly to hearing than it did in M52-M54;

yet, in fact, there is less of it this time. From M220 to M260 we have a forty-measure parallel of M55-M95, the main key of the piece predominating, and the whole passage being enhanced in interest by modifications in color and by fresh rhythmical effects,—notably at M243-M245. The ending is foreshadowed by the scale-passages which fill M260-M261. At M264 the Coda (a general name for any passage which suggests and then confirms finality) begins. The same fragments of the Hymn-Theme which began the Development-Section now alternate with a high chord-wise four-note figure (M264-M271) and a loud Coda-within-Coda confirms the close, neatly emphasized by a pair of delicate final chords.

* * * *

Summarizing the results of our tour of discovery through the Beethoven *Larghetto*, we have noted the following:

Themes: 1, Hymn; 2, Skipping; 3, Full-Chord; 4, Smooth; 5, Rhythm-Contrast; 6, Full-Chord-and-After-Phrase; 6, Catchy;

Species of Theme-Development: 1, Ornamentation; 2, Change of Color; 3, Association; 4, Imitation; 5, Detail-Work; 6, Variation; 7, Reversal; 8, Change of Mode; 9, Change of Key; 10, Rhythm-Intensification; 11, Inversion; 12, Rhythm-Modification; (as Contrast is a self-evident necessity in any work of art, we make no category which fails to specify the kind of contrast;)

The functions of Cadential Effects;

The role played by the hearer's sense of the basic rhythm of the piece;

The significance of Silence.

* * * *

The foregoing analysis may strike the student as forbiddingly complicated and detailed; while the connoisseur—if he does it the honor of a reading—will note the absence

of many staples of technical analysis. The learner may perhaps be encouraged to give it careful and very studious attention, if he heeds our assurance that we are well toward establishing a basis for auditional attention to all instrumental compositions from Haydn to Brahms inclusive. The connoisseur may be requested to suspend judgment of this part of our presentation until we have either succeeded or failed in our attempt to show that the "staples of technical analysis" are not vital to the full understanding of the message of the composer.

TYPICAL AND TOPICAL

THIS detailed presentation of species of Thematic Development may now be confirmed by observation of several representative works; and there will be opportunity to observe other staple features of composition. The Beethoven *Larghetto* is an orchestral work. Our comment is based on a piano arrangement. Whether the version of the work used by the Listener was for one player (two hands) or for two players (four hands),* the attempt of the arranger has been to represent the orchestra as fully as possible. We have, then, not been dealing with the work in exactly the form in which Beethoven conceived it.

In turning now to a *Rondo* by Mozart, we have a work in the composer's exact terms, except that the instrument now used is richer and more powerful than Mozart's five-octave piano. The piece is the last movement of the *Sonata in B \flat* (for piano), known as K. 333 because it has that number in the Köchel Catalog of Mozart's works.

* * * *

The Ambitious Listener may perhaps feel embarrassment in saying K. 333. He need feel no flush of highbrowism in thus giving a work a specific name. During the year of background reading which has been suggested, he will meet titles like the above or like the following: B. & H., No. 6; Peters, No. 4; Opus 18, No. 5; Eroica; Paris, No. 3.

*As it certainly was, if a player-piano was used.

If he undertakes the simple task of looking up the sources of them, he will find nothing occult, but merely a common-sense solution of a practical problem: how to identify a work among similar works in the same key or without special title. The Mozart *Sonata* might also be named Peters, No. 4, or Universal, No. 16, as those are its numbers in the respective editions.

* * * *

We quote from a standard source that a Rondo is "a piece of music having one principal subject to which a return is always made after the introduction of other matter, so as to give a symmetrical or *rounded* form to the whole." Except that the last clause seems to be straining a bit for effect, the definition is serviceable. At any rate, the Rondo exemplifies very simply and conclusively the fact that re-statement, after a discreetly contrasted episodical passage, is agreeable and effective as a means of expression through music.

Stated in the rough, a Rondo consists of a recurrent Something, alternated with one or more Something-Elises. The Something-Elises are various, but the same Something-Else may appear more than once; or a Something-Else may occasionally be derived from the Something. We shall see all this exemplified in the Mozart Rondo.

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We may preludize by noticing another thing in the Mozart Rondo, and may also review the Beethoven *Larghetto* spending some attention along similar lines; but with less definite results because, as above mentioned, the *Larghetto*, as printed in piano score, is an arrangement, not an original.

In addition to the themes, the accompaniments and the episodical and cadential passages show brief phrases. These are, of course, an integral part of the work, whether associated with themes or accomplishing some purpose of transition, of preparation, or of finality. If the Ambitious Listener finds himself whistling or humming one of these incidental bits, he may know that he is on the right track toward fuller enjoyment. Take, for instance, that plain little bass of the first four measures; that's an idea, too,—especially when one affiliates it with the bass of M5-M8. The more active lower part in M9-M10 and M13-M14 may not be merely umpty-dumpty; that depends. Again, the Bass—or even the Alto—in M17-M18 and M19-M20 says something; and the little phrases, both Soprano and Bass, in M21-M23, can perhaps justify themselves as thoughts.

We shall be able to classify and rationalize all these things later. An attempt to do so now might result in confusion. These are elements of an earlier musical style blended or welded into music as we know it. For the present, the Listener is invited to notice them as he finds it convenient or interesting to do so.

Naming our Something and our Something-Elves by letters, we find the Rondo's sections aligning themselves as follows:

A, M1-M16; Transitional, M16-M24; B, M24-M28, merging into a transitional cadential passage up to M36; Transitional and Introductory, M36-M40; A, M41-M56; Transitional as at M16, but broken at M61 and sharply veering at M62, with cadential effect to M64. Then follows a long Something-Else section (C), showing new themes at M64 and at M76; also some development of A by Change of Mode and Change of Key, and some elaboration of various elements and expansion of cadential effects up to M112. A, M112-M127;

then transitions as at M16, broken at M132, but re-working material of M21-M24 up to M148; B, M148-M164, and its pertinent transitional and dramatically cadential material up to the hold in M171; then a neat dash for the Finale at M173, where Theme A starts a bit of more active brilliancy; again a dramatic gesture and pose at M198; A, M199-M206; Transitional and Cadential, M206-M213; and a Coda, with reminiscences of Theme A, to M221, where a Coda-within-Coda confirms the conclusion.

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In traversing the Beethoven *Larghetto*, we listed every theme, while in the Mozart *Rondo* we classed several passages as transitional or cadential, or both. This for two reasons: first, Beethoven's themes average to be "meatier" than Mozart's; second, we were not attempting to outline the structure of the Beethoven work, but only to show its many kinds of Thematic Development. The Mozart *Rondo* might serve to show how few kinds of Thematic Development a composer has to use, if he is versatile in melodic invention, or if his ideas are of the self-propagating kind, as we find in the *Rondo* at M15, M24, M29, M32, M36, M65, M68, and especially at M76.

Mozart's spontaneity is, as it were, more facile than Beethoven's. Indeed, the Ambitious Listener may quite properly regard the Mozart *Rondo* as rather thin, and its ornamentation as more or less "gingerbready." He would doubtless have received a similar impression about many things if, with twentieth century perceptions, he could have taken a look-in on the costumes and manners of the late eighteenth century. As a matter of fact, any inexperienced twentieth century listener who is charmed or thrilled by this Mozart work after the fifth hearing of it at, say, weekly intervals, may regard himself as lucky. It takes years for

most modern hearers to develop a taste for that kind of thing; to graduate, so to speak, from a state of hearing on sufferance into a state of hearing with eagerness.

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The promised screed on the "technique of rhythm-setting" belongs about here.

In the "gentleman's agreement" between auditor and composer, it is understood that the auditor will deliver a rhythm-consciousness for the composer to use. Neither is playing the plain, straight game unless at once the latter lines up the rhythm, and the former "sets" it within himself. Of course the composer may prefer that a kind of haze float around the beginning of his work,—a case of "over his keys the musing organist;" or perhaps there is an animated call for attention. But, by and large, the composer settles the thing at once for the auditor.

The Ambitious Listener will of course wish to carry out his part of the contract. He will probably take our suggestion to train himself to make that action, as early as possible, automatic for each new piece he hears. If he is listening to an orchestral work, the conductor's beat will give at once the necessary information; and it is worth while to look up the time-beating code in a cyclopedia (under "Conducting") or in a book on the subject. Lacking the printed music or a conductor, the auditor has to do his own "setting,"—that is, the establishing in himself of the basic rhythm of the piece. If he does not do that, he will, for instance, put Beethoven out of business between M56 and M73 of the *Larghetto*, and at corresponding passages be-

ginning at M138 and M210; and the composer will be quite unable to wax dramatic at M108.

A practical method of giving oneself a lesson is to have somebody play portions of twenty different (preferably unfamiliar) records or rolls, and listen for the rhythm only; or to find some accommodating skilled pianist to reel off the beginnings of many pieces. The Listener does not have to decide whether a piece is, for instance, in three-four or three-eight time; only that it is in triple time.

After a few weeks of casual practice, the Ambitious Listener may give himself the adventurous test of maintaining his rhythmic balance throughout the First Movement of Brahms's *Third Symphony*. He will find that composer dealing in rhythms of the now-you-see-it-and-now-you-don't variety; and he will get good training in two items of rhythmic mental gymnastics: detection of triplet sub-pulses, and swapping main-pulse horses in mid-stream.

* * * *

Thematic Development being the basis of all musical discourse, the Theme With Variations is one of the standard forms. In a way, it is not a form, but a growth. It is embodied Thematic Development. Unity and variety are its chief characteristics. Its unity is obviously unavoidable, since all springs from one source. Its art lies in the apt exhaustiveness of its variety. If inept, the exhaustiveness becomes monotony; if inexhaustive, the work is inconclusive, or futile, or inane. We may well call the Theme With Variations the composer's supreme medium of expression, if for no other reason than that Beethoven had recourse to it, in the *Third* and *Ninth Symphonies*, for the climactic

utterances of the last movements. In the case of another master of the larger forms we may note the same: when Brahms closed his *Fourth Symphony* with a Theme With Variations, he was through with writing symphonies.

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From other points of view the Theme With Variations is, *par excellence*, the composer's form. He can put days, weeks, months, years, or decades into one of these works, and always be working on one thing, on the same thing, on a purely musical thing. The three works which we discuss are good samples, in that they show quite different results of the same practice, and also in that they exemplify what we have called apt exhaustiveness.

There is no doubt that exhaustiveness is a feature of any work of permanent value. This means that the work must say enough. "Apt" implies that it must not say too much. The result must need neither pruning nor grafting. This quality of exact sufficiency is one of the special qualities of products of first-rate genius. The aptness of exhaustiveness results from complete discretion in fitting treatment to material; and this "material" includes, in music, not merely melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic substance, but also the animate and inanimate means of performance,—which we have called Purveyance.

* * * *

In all these activities Man is following Nature's lead. Creative activity is obviously the prime sport of both Nature and Man. Joyful, spontaneous impulse expresses itself in creativeness. Nature, wielding the principle of life and applying it to elemental substance, delights in exuberance,

prolification, redundancy, reduplication, yet exemplifies perfect economy in the resultant individual units. Even reduplication does not annul individuality; a connoisseur has claimed that no Seckel pear tastes exactly like any other Seckel pear. Man, in the domain of as many of the fine arts as he can master, is impelled to ceaseless nature-like activity, leaving reduplication to machines, which he sometimes seems to endow with a pretty good imitation of a soul. If any man succeeds in producing one individual living work, he may be called a genius; if several, a great genius; if many, an epoch-making genius.

In writing a Theme With Variations, a composer is manifesting creativeness with most obvious directness. In the three specimens we bring to observation, we see this activity giving three quite different results. We may expect to find each result a perfect one, since several generations of hearers have already found complete satisfaction in each work.

And, of course, the Ambitious Listener's concrete task is, at his convenience, to find these works interesting from end to end. This does not have to be done before proceeding. Capacity to enjoy them may be the result of several seasons of listening to quite different kinds of compositions. That capacity cannot fail of final attainment by the steadily evolving hearer. As was said above about something else, if the Ambitious Listener is already at that stage, he is lucky.

* * * *

All that need interest us concerning the title of *The Harmonious Blacksmith* is that Händel did not give his

piece that name. For him it was one item of a suite. For us it is merely a Theme With Variations. The theme is really six measures long, the first two and the last four each being repeated. In some editions some of the repeats are printed in full, instead of being indicated by repeat-marks.

Note the following scheme of variations:

I, Right hand active; II, Left hand active; III, Right hand more active; IV, Left hand more active; V, Both hands most active.

We find that Händel has offered in this work a text on which a lengthy sermon might be preached. We shall hold to our purpose to be as brief as possible, partly because we shall have another opportunity to make the same points. But it would not be fair to the Ambitious Listener to leave him in ignorance of a feature which he will sooner or later find to be not only a determining factor in his enjoyment of a work, but also an explanation of his waning interest in many another work.

* * * *

One plain question has sooner or later to be answered concerning every work of art: "What did the author have, and what did he do with what he had?" When we talk about creative activity, and about the relation between material and treatment, we are discussing the same question in words of more than one syllable; and when we say Purveyance, we are merely arranging to sum up the subject in one word. In this piece of Händel, the plain answer to the plain question is: "Two hands and a keyboard." The same is, of course, true of any piano composition; only, in this particular piece, the composer frankly and systematically uses his means of Purveyance. Anybody can see that

at a glance. The procedure is obvious, precise, direct. Anybody can note the unassuming charm of the brief theme. Anybody can see the discreet adaptation of the tilting and scale-wise figurations to the normal scope of the piece and to the normal powers of a youthful performer. And, if the remark is made that the work is a specimen of apt exhaustiveness, anybody can see that it is exhaustive, and anybody can readily believe that it is aptly so.

There would be no reason to emphasize all this if it did not have to do with something important. We are, in fact, dealing with a great fundamental principle. There would be nothing new in the statement that there must be good judgment in the treatment of the thematic material of a piece; but it is perhaps new to say that apparently material things, which we comprise under the general name of Purveyance, have everything to do with the life of any composition. In a word, these features which we have been pointing out in the Händel piece, choosing this work for an example because anybody can see them in it, are absolute essentials of any work which is to live. In other respects a work may be perfect; but unless it meets the requirements of good purveyance, it will not live. We shall take occasion to speak again on this subject when we have led the Ambitious Listener somewhat further. At the present moment we content ourselves with saying that an inspired or popular tune, a captivating title, and an ingratiating manipulation of material may sell the thousandth copy of a piece to the first generation, but never the millionth copy to the tenth generation.

* * * *

The Ambitious Listener will perhaps have the impres-

sion that all such things lie quite beyond the scope of his perception. Before encouraging him to believe that they do not, we take the risk of intimidating him still more by saying that quite a bit remains to be said on this subject of Purveyance.

In any field of human effort we judge persons not merely by their momentary activity but also by their latent energy; not merely by their expended power but also by their reserve power. And we have joy in doing a thing ourselves or in observing others do anything, only when we feel in ourselves, or sense in others, the power to do more than the thing actually being done. This ability to enjoy is pervasive and comprehensive. It results even in apparent contradictions. For instance, anybody who understands boxing probably gets very intense enjoyment in observing the skill and power of the winner of a prize-fight; but his enjoyment is probably keener still if he observes that the loser could stand much more punishment than he is getting. Or, to show how paradoxical are some phases of delight, one might cite the case of the peasant woman who, while being beaten by her husband, couldn't help admiring him for being such a wonderful hitter.

These things certainly have nothing to do with listening to music if the Ambitious Listener's ambition is to take music into his system as he might imbibe a lemonade,—through a straw. If, however, he wants to “get to” great music and have great music “get to” him, he may take for granted that there is very little of human experience that doesn't have to do with listening to music. In fact, the

reason why the same great work means different things to different people is that their life-experiences are different.

To return now, by degrees, to the Händel piece. If we do not sense that the performer's powers are being discreetly and amply used in responding to what the composer discreetly and amply demands, the work is less enjoyable than it might be. If we feel that the performer is at the utmost limit of his power in rendering it, the event is less enjoyable than it might be. Unless we feel that the composer has many other demands that he might have made, had he so chosen, the work is less enjoyable than it might be.

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And now to encourage the Ambitious Listener, who is perhaps asking how to cultivate these desirable enjoyments.

Perceptions of qualities of anything are either relative or absolute; either comparative or immediate; based either on experience or on direct sensory reaction. Perception of the qualities of milk appears to be quite generally absolute. Perception of the qualities of roast lamb is at first relative, but becomes absolute. Perception of the qualities of oysters remains, for many, permanently relative. If an absolute perception of the qualities of oysters is sought, an eating itinerary and schedule must be arranged. Most people spare themselves the expense and are satisfied with a relative perception.

So with the qualities of music. While we have absolute perception of the qualities of some melodies, scale-degrees, chords, or tone-colors, and while many individuals acquire absolute perceptions in this or that field, we are quite content with relative perception in domains where

years of study and observation are required to make perception absolute.

Hence we may encourage the Ambitious Listener toward developing his perception of Purveyance. Experience rapidly sharpens the power of observation. One of the chief helps toward perceiving a thing is knowing for sure that it is there to perceive; another is a feeling of certainty that it will stay where it is. These helps the Ambitious Listener certainly has. The Händel piece happens to present with complete obviousness what might be called the facts. The Haydn *Andante With Variations* shows the same thing, of course; only the use of material there is not, so to speak, in one-two-three order. With the Haydn *Variations* from the *Emperor Quartet*, the case is different in a still different way, and another phase of Purveyance comes into the question.

The road toward fuller development of one's flair for Purveyance, both as to performers and as to means of performance, lies, as we have said, along the line of general musical experience. One establishes a basis by gaining complete familiarity with, for instance, a dozen famous symphonies, of perhaps three different epochs. Here, of course, the medium of expression is large and varied. But if the Listener knows in advance that part of his enjoyment is finally going to come from perceiving what the orchestral groups, as individuals and as collective units, do, by themselves and along with the others, he will naturally pay a species of directed and controlled attention instead of presenting something resembling a hopper into which the orchestra can dump its music. If for instance, he looks for

the contributions of the brass or wind instruments, he will be tending toward acquisition of that relative perception of Purveyance which is such a valuable part of one's listening outfit. Likewise, in observing what master-artists accomplish with tasks set by master-composers, one early gets a notion of the staple technique and diction of various instruments, and then gradually widens the perception to grasp significant elaborations and extensions. Incidentally, the Ambitious Listener will be preparing himself to welcome or reject, for reasons which he can definitely though perhaps humbly offer, works which confuse or baffle or bore hearers who have not accustomed themselves to observe Purveyance as an element of music. In other words, he will be storing up possibilities of comfort as well as of enjoyment.

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All this talk about Purveyance might seem to be leading toward a suggestion that Melody, Harmony and Rhythm haven't so much to do with a work's value, after all. A few statements will probably set things to rights.

In the first place, we are talking about works that are alive. No composition even begins to live unless its melodies and harmonies have beauty, significance, vitality, variety.

In the second place, while we can sometimes see why a melody or chord is inane, it is often impossible to say why it is good.

In the third place, very often the only detectable feature of excellence in a melody is that the composer can "get something out of it" by treatment (development) of it. To be able to care for a melody because it has that quality can

turn out to be an enormously difficult feat of listenership. A reasonable method of preparation for the performance of that task would seem to be a study of what happens because of melody; and we are pursuing this method of indirection as directly and simply as we can.

In the fourth place: (here we might say something about our advice as to collateral reading of accomplished listeners.)

In the fifth place: (here we might say something concerning the space-limitations of this book.)

In the sixth place: (here we might say that it is just as interesting to a writer to write what has been written elsewhere as it is to a reader to read what he has read elsewhere.)

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There is little more to be mentioned about the Händel piece. The unliteralness of the variations is not exceptional. It would be hard to say whether the author thought of the composition as in three or in four voices. The third variation is the most interestingly made, if one likes to distinguish what the various voices have to say. When we have taken a look at some of John Sebastian Bach's compositions, this Händel piece can be profitably revisited.

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The Haydn *Andante With Variations in F Minor* is intended for about the same grade of player as Händel's *Harmonious Blacksmith*, but not for the same grade of listener. The theme itself has forty-nine measures, as printed; with repeats, ninety-eight. Its first division, in two sections, has twenty-nine measures, as printed; its second, also in two sections, twenty.

Of course nobody could possibly get a forty-nine-measure theme into his head at a first hearing, even though its four sections were repeated; and, as all that the composer can count on is one hearing per auditor, he must bethink himself as to means of making that hearing as impressive and as informative as possible. If he is a good composer, his creative theme-thought will automatically take into account the conditions, and his inspiration will express itself accordingly. We can note how either original inspiration or inspired re-working brought that about in this theme. M1 shows a clear start on an accompaniment, and the theme is in the upper voice; at M7 the accompaniment takes the upper register while the second portion of the theme takes the lower. No other portion of the theme has this plan. A major tonality has been brought around by the concluding measures of the first section. In this key (M13) the same accompaniment-pattern starts, and we have a four-measure ornate sprout from the main theme. In M18-M19, the original minor key having been regained, the right hand crosses the left twice. Here Haydn's sense of Purveyance includes even the eye of the listener as a help toward early seizing of the musical idea. To make assurance doubly sure, he has the left hand cross the right in M23-M24. Then a dramatic full chord spread out full, and he takes the home-stretch to the conclusion.

Then comes the Trio Section of the theme. As to this title, we quote from a reliable source, with slight substitution of words: "How the second part of a dance-form or march acquired the name Trio is not quite clear;" and we refer the reader to dictionaries and cyclopedias, in the ex-

pectation that he will find the same kind of connection between the name and nature of the Trio as he finds between the name and nature of Washington Street in any city or town. This is not a criticism of dictionaries, but a suggestion that the Ambitious Listener occasionally accept a name as a name, whether its origin is traceable or not. As we have elsewhere said or implied, most musical names of procedures and forms have an origin which the listener's common sense will readily justify.

Unlike the previous sections, both sections of the Trio have major modality throughout, seasoned or enriched by a few suggestions of closely related keys,—“closely related” because they glide into and out of our musical notice without a jar. Its two sections start with a creep-wise phrase unlike anything else in the theme. The individualization of this division is complete, both by its major mode and by its opening phrase.

Every kind of Thematic Development mentioned in our summary after the Beethoven *Larghetto* is used in this work, including Development by Reversal in M40 and M94; and note what happens in M137 (Bass) and M138 (Soprano)! The Ambitious Listener will, we hope, find interest in spotting instances.

As we examine this work up to M146 inclusive, we find an ideally conceived theme, and an ideally planned and executed treatment of the same. This treatment is aptly and discreetly exhaustive in methods of dealing with the theme and in its drafts on the technique of the player as then developed to exploit the keyboard instrument. Every register is called on for its characteristic and effective ex-

pression. Negatively, the work is stylistically impeccable; positively, it is inspired as to theme, and richly imaginative as to all details of thought-content. At M147 there is the customary return to a plain statement of the original theme, this time without repeats. It turns out to be the beginning of the so-called Finale.

From M168 we find material which can give food for thought. An incentive for similar pondering came toward the end of the Mozart *Rondo*. We postponed, because two examples are at least four times as good as one.

The question thrust upon us unconsciously by Haydn is this: Has display, as such, any proper place in musical art?

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It would seem that only a quibbler could question the statement that M169-M228 of the Haydn *Theme With Variations* are intended, or at least adapted to give the performer an opportunity to "show off." And, as showing off is ordinarily classed as an unadmirable procedure, the question naturally, if not necessarily, arises as to whether a great composer remains a great composer in furnishing such material, and also whether a serious artist remains a serious artist while performing it.

Having included Purveyance among the elements of music, it would be possible to remark that Haydn appended to his work a little essay in Purveyance. Thus the ground would seem to be promptly, neatly, conveniently, and completely covered, and the troublesome question would be dismissed. The inclusion of such a passage would be thus, as it were, scientifically justified.

This citation of the principle and practice of Purveyance might, however, strike many as inconclusive. Arguments may be desirable. We present two—and a half.

Showing off is objectionable primarily because it offends good taste. But one cannot expect to have taste, good or bad, for anything, unless observation and experience are sufficient to afford real enjoyment of activities in the respective field. One does not recognize “grand-stand playing” in a game unless he knows the game very well. For the novice, every “wind-up” of a pitcher seems to be just for effect. Thus, in judging this final section of the Haydn work, only a fairly extended acquaintance with things of the same kind, and some enjoyment of something of the same kind by some composer or other, can prepare the hearer to accept or reject what Haydn here offers. That is, only a taster can taste. This argument sounds stronger than it is, but is really much stronger than it sounds; which makes it, of course, at least twice as strong as it is While the Ambitious Listener is getting his bearings as to the tightness of our logic, we seize the occasion to give a word of advice: If he finds himself, by natural or acquired habit, a bit stiff-necked in the presence of anything resembling display, it is quite proper that he should study Purveyance seriously and himself humorously. There is no greater handicap to enjoyment than a chronic stiff neck; and the study of Purveyance, carried far enough, will effect a permanent cure.*

*We have made the reduction to the absurd as absurd as we could. There can of course be no logical argument against showing off. Except for the silly flimflam about strength, our argument is as sound as any argument about taste can be. *De gustibus non est disputandum.* We had really done the necessary when we classified such a finale as

The second argument might be called humanistic. It has unstiffened many necks. The career of the performer involves unflagging devotion of physical and nervous energy to the realization of ideals. The life of many a celebrated soloist would seem, to the ordinary nine-to-five businessman, like the drudgery of a slave. Rubinstein is reported to have said: "If I omit practice for one day, I notice it; if for two days, the critics notice it; if for three days, the public notices it." The statement is doubtless an exaggeration; but it embodies relentless facts. Now, no money can pay an artist for his hours of drudgery; his only adequate reward is the opportunity to manifest the results of them. Hence we find occasionally on concert programs of great artists ridiculously tawdry compositions, chosen either because the public does not relish similar compositions of great masters, or because—as is the case with the Violoncello—great composers have delivered too few available works.

The half-an-argument has been mentioned earlier: the joy of suggesting and sensing the latent power of composer or performer, both of which find expression in passages which permit display. And sometimes, glorified in embodi-

a little essay in Purveyance. A composer like Haydn or Mozart, who commands the resources of Pitch and Pulse (Melody, Harmony, Rhythm) can deliver material in the realm of Purveyance which meets the connoisseur's requirements as to taste. A composer who commands only the resources of Pace, Power, and Purveyance, can produce masterly studio-material, where any kind of show-off is permissible, or even welcome, because nobody pays to get in except the person who is showing off. There are said to be great classics in the domain of Purveyance. It would be very odd if Czerny, for instance, who shed about 850 officially enumerable compositions, had not turned out to be the author of at least one such.

ment by a master performer, an apparently flimsy concertocadenza brings worthy and substantial climax to a long and logically built movement.

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The *Variations* from the *Emperor Quartet* of Haydn will perhaps interest the Listener as a product quite different from his *Andante With Variations*. The work will also help us to say something about a handicap which limits or inhibits the enjoyment of many listeners.

We are really speaking of a set of handicaps.

Most people like piano music; or, if they no longer enjoy it, they used to. It was probably the kind of music they liked first. The piano is a household instrument, and the pianist is more numerous than any other instrumentalist. One soon gets the tonal and technical vocabulary of the piano, and its musical message is understood. Then too, there is generally only one performer, who speaks, as it were, directly to the hearer. The music is a person-to-person affair. There are no complications.

The piano does not sustain the tone. Its maximum sustainment is a reverberation, always far less in power than the initial sound. Yet so accustomed does one become to the piano's form of expression, that organ music is not enjoyed because the tone is sustained.

Again, a single violin may give pleasure, while two violins, or a violin and a violoncello, present an insoluble problem of audition. Neither can be understood because of the presence of the other.

It may even happen that a hearer gets enjoyment from

a full orchestra, but fails to comprehend the utterances of a smaller body of players, the string orchestra.

It is more fun to be a successful listener in a few fields than a dabster at listening in many. Both Jack-of-all-listening and Jack-of-no-listening sing that same old refrain: "I don't know anything about music, but I know what I like." The Ambitious Listener may wish to make his listening technique gradually more comprehensive; and it may help him to know that each category of works may present its individual problem. If he wonders where he can find what the categories are, we suggest that he consult the catalog of some century-old European publishing house (Breitkopf & Härtel, for instance, or Peters), and, with a foot-rule in hand, draw up a schedule of the respective lengths of the lists of original works (not arrangements) for this or that instrument or combination. He will then have his graduated categories, and can pick from time to time one of the larger for special treatment during a particular season. This feature of usefulness is a reason why catalogs were mentioned in our list of background reading.

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There is one general category which will be found to include many small and large individual categories—Chamber Music. The term (a translation of the old classification, *musica di camera*) names music worthy of being unaccompanied by conversation, and intended for performance by a small group, for a small group, in a room (*camera*) of a house. As things have developed, Chamber Music gets heard chiefly in small halls; but its proper *habitat* is a living-room. Any sonata is a piece of chamber music, from

the composer's point of view. Other sub-categories are: Piano Trio, Piano Quartet, Piano Quintet (all meaning one piano plus other instruments), and that supreme among all groups, the String Quartet.

Probably the peculiar charm of Chamber Music lies, like that of solo piano music, in its person-to-person phases. Each player has an independent, non-doubeable part; he has neither aid nor interference in his individual work, but possibilities of coöperation are infinite. The highest musicianship finds in Chamber Music its ideal vehicle of expression. The greatest masters have cultivated the field intensively, delivering a supply of works already practically inexhaustible. A unique fact is: that no one who once has become genuinely interested in Chamber Music has ever ceased to be interested in it. Particularly the field of the String Quartet invites the Ambitious Listener's cultivation. As listening technique is here the hardest to acquire, so is it richest in rewards through enjoyment, and most lasting and pervasive in its spiritual exhilaration of the individual.

Four-voice texture is standard in music; of course, since nature furnishes Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass. Thus far we have examined no work for four individual instruments; music which demands, as it were, 25% of the hearer's attention to each part, while requiring at the same time 100% of his attention to all. If attention could be classified and computed by arithmetical laws, this might look like what doesn't exist. Higher mathematics can of course cover possibilities of its existence by saying something about the fourth dimension—or the fifth. Psychologists and psychoanalysts, and other seekers for high-class

entertainment in the realm of the intangible, could never have flourished so copiously if little anomalies like 200%-attention didn't furnish them material to paw over. Creative artists had of course been working that kind of attention ages before psychologists were invented. Perhaps the psychologarithmeticians of the future will find some 1000%-attention lying about unnoticed, when they get around to tackle music from the standpoint of such grasp of the art as will enable them to name it, of their own motion and conviction, the Art Universal. The Ambitious Listener may be destined to become that kind of a phenix. He will certainly be preparing to become a welcomely exceptional species of bird by developing his power to enjoy string quartet music.

The Finale of Beethoven's *Quartet in C Minor*, Op. 18, No. 4, may serve the Ambitious Listener as a sample of Chamber Music. He will have no difficulty in securing a mechanical reproduction of it or of any of the works included in our hand-book of *Masterpieces of Music in Pocket Piano Score*. He will find also in that book the movements of Mendelssohn and Brahms Symphonies which we have set parallel with the Beethoven *Larghetto* as material for early detailed study, and can apply to them the simple and direct processes of analytical observation which we have discussed and exemplified. He can make these works his own, to hum, to whistle, to recognize, to "imagine." Together, they will form a vital and infinitely useful nucleus of musical experience, a "handy-reference" equipment for the Listener.

Incidentally, the Beethoven Quartet movement furnishes some uniquely obvious specimens of humor in music; and,

as it is played by phonograph or player-piano, he may at certain moments indulge in what is taboo in the concert-hall: hearty laughter!

ABOUT MUSIC THAT FEW UNDERSTAND

MUSIC that everybody can understand employs the five elements of music in accordance with certain habits of musical expression which have long been traditional. It would be possible to show, in perhaps twenty pages of this text, that the music we have thus far been observing is directly developed from simple folk-songs, conventional dance-tunes, with some sprinkling of operetta and opera style, and some zestful dashes of practices which, when dominating a composition, put it in the class of music that few understand. As, however, such a twenty-page exposition would amount to little in heightening our enjoyment of this music, we postpone the whole matter until widened observation may make one page suffice, instead of the now necessary twenty.

The melodies of readily understandable music are Periodic. Periodic Melody is such as we find in hymns, stanzaic songs, folksongs. It shows symmetrical grouping of related phrases, divisions or sections; is rarely less than eight measures in length; individualizes itself when sung, hummed, or whistled; readily adapts itself to accompany the steady pace of a walk or the rhythmical racket or whirr of railroad- or trolley car. It is also suggestible as a whole by one of its parts—just as, for example, one can mentally construct a whole chair on seeing the rung of a chair. From Periodic Melody as a staple element of music are therefore

derived such themes as we enumerated in viewing the Beethoven *Larghetto*: some, complete melodies; some, fragmentary and suggestive of a remainder not stated; all, periodic in essence, even when brief.

Periodic Melody is backed up by Harmony in constituting what is called Homophonic Music—as over against Polyphonic Music, which we are presently to discuss. Cadential effects and full cadences are common. Chords support, as it were, the melody, and succeed each other in progressions which suggest an easy step, a graceful turn of a corner, the mechanical action of a telescope, or the merging and emerging designs of a kaleidoscope.

Thus far we have been dealing with Homophonic Music and Periodic Melody.

* * * *

We now begin to consider Polyphonic Music and Non-Periodic Melody. Polyphony and Polyphonic, as noun and adjective, might be called parallel with the terms Counterpoint and Contrapuntal. In many connections one may say either Counterpoint or Polyphony, either Contrapuntal or Polyphonic. But if the subject is professional studies, some speak preferably of Counterpoint, which is that branch of technical study which prepares for the writing of Polyphony.

As to derivation, Counterpoint signifies, from Latin elements, Note-Against-Note (*punctum contra punctum*); Polyphony, from Greek elements, Many-Voiced (*polys*, many; *phōnē*, sound). The connotation of either term is: two or more melodies present at the same time.

Melodies used in exclusively contrapuntal (or poly-

phonic) compositions are different from those used in non-contrapuntal (homophonic) music. The failure to establish and perceive this difference is perhaps more largely than anything else responsible for the disabilities of hearers.

Contrapuntal (or Polyphonic) Melody is Non-Periodic. This statement and this name are not new; but our characterization of Non-Periodic Melody may turn out to be new. Non-Periodic Melody is melody which is bound for a goal, and, when it arrives at its goal, the hearer becomes aware that it has been bound for that goal ever since it started. We might say that the basic feature of Non-Periodic Melody is direction; as that word, however, has so many and varied meanings, we prefer to coin a word and to say that Non-Periodic (or Contrapuntal, or Polyphonic) Melody has *Goalfulness*. We are of course *not* saying that this quality is absent from Periodic Melody. What we are saying is that the *only* distinguishable staple quality of Contrapuntal Melody is goalfulness, whereas the several staple qualities of Periodic Melody are those which we have earlier enumerated.

As is the case with Periodic Melody, no analysis is able to prove why this or that bit of Non-Periodic Melody is good or bad. The goalfulness has to be, as it were, sub-cutaneously injected by genius. It is as impossible to define or prove the inspiration of John Sebastian Bach as it is to trace specifications of the inanity of John Doe: just as, in the field of Periodic Melody, it is impossible to substantiate the superiority of *Who is Sylvia?* over a setting of the same by the talented Frank Doe. If, however, the hearer knows exactly what to expect and what not to expect in con-

trapuntal music, he has at least the way cleared toward his personal perception of Bach's inspiration; which, as we have already perhaps too often said, is the only perception that counts.

* * * *

It is unfortunate that we have to say that the task of the Ambitious Listener is here far more difficult than in any other domain of observation. There comes to mind the baffled music-lover's remark about one movement of a double concerto by Bach: "For the life of me, I cannot make out what the accompaniment has to do with what those violinists are playing; it sounds like the accompaniment to another piece." Precisely this apparent independence of simultaneous voices or groups can daze the casual listener,—or even more surely the listener whose taste for Periodic Melody has been intensively cultivated. The basic unit of polyphony, non-periodic melody, offers the composer ideational possibilities which are (if not literally, at any rate practically) infinite in number. A non-periodic melody may consist of many notes or few. Two notes can certainly make such a melody; and there may even be cases where we should be willing to attribute melodic power to an isolated note.* Furthermore, the listener to periodic melody has to be constantly alert to variation in speed, variety in rhythm, difference in phrase-length, subdivision, ellipsis, inversion, reversal, interruption, truncation, irregularity of accent, and other developmental processes, including those enumerated during our analysis of the Beethoven *Larghetto*.

*Such, for instance, as that low F in Measure 207 of the First Movement of Beethoven's Violin Concerto. It is merely a "broken away" note from a theme already often heard; but the composer makes it "speak volumes." It is less soul-shaking when it later appears as Bb.

The Ambitious Listener might well find his zeal cooling in the presence of the immediately foregoing statements. He need experience no chill. We can at once introduce him to works consisting of polyphonic music in quite tangible form, comprehensible by anybody. Some of the works have aptly been called "great music in its lowest terms." The music may not be enjoyable; that is a personal affair, as has so often been said. But at least the listener can see what the music is made of, and can find out whether he enjoys it, after he has definitely seen what it is that other people find enjoyable.

From the nature of non-periodic melody, and from the consequent possibility, in polyphonic music, of not merely associating but also enchainning and overlapping melodies, comes another basic feature which, especially in works of large scope, adds to the listener's task: the indeterminate demands, within the work, of continuous attention of the hearer. Just as, in listening to a speaker, one must be ready to maintain attention to the making of a point involving a series of related statements, some of which are secondary, some tertiary, yet all necessary to the particular sub-conclusion toward which the speaker is proceeding; so, in polyphonic music, which has all the characteristics of variety and continuity to be found in prose, there are passages of considerable length which must be taken as a whole; and, if the attention cannot meet the composer's durational demands, the meaning becomes confused, and enjoyment is transformed into indifference or, perhaps, into irritation.

Some of these features we shall now undertake to pre-

sent, as embodied and exemplified in a simple work of John Sebastian Bach.

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The *Invention in F*, Number Eight in the series of fifteen, will serve us well. A glance at the piece will show that each of the two parts is as active as the other, which is ideally characteristic of the polyphonic style. M1 has a chord-wise bit of non-periodic melody, with the upper octave (first note of M2) as its goal. That note becomes the opening of a scale-wise descending phrase which has the lower octave as its goal. One can also think of the two measures as making one non-periodic melody or theme, in which the hops of M1 are finally successful in reaching high enough to start the downward slide, with its two incidental humps. Whether we take the theme to be of one or of two measures, we shall note Bach's discretion in filling one measure with skips, the other with steps—thus providing variety of thematic material. M2-M3 in the Bass are identical with M1-M2 in the Soprano—Development by Imitation. The same practice is carried out in M3-M4, except that the Soprano in M4 starts something new. See how neatly the next goal becomes the first beat of M7; but that is only a sub-goal, as the Soprano, changing the width of a skip, and imitated by the Bass, also with alteration of skips, manages to start us (at M7) for a goal situated at the first beat of M11. Each measure's first beat is a sub-goal, and at the same time a starting point for another goal. The little slide-over-the-goal of the Soprano at M10 is an inspired touch, and the Bass performs a similar prank at M11. Meanwhile the Soprano has initiated a cadential effect which settles us

fairly at a temporary conclusion in M12. Now the Bass takes the lead, the Soprano imitating. M15 brings something quite fresh, the tilting lower between-notes of the Soprano furnishing the goalfulness of the figure, while the clearly individualized Bass embodies the same expectancy in a quite different way. The material of M1-M3 is treated anew in M16-M18; M19 inverts M15; M20 rings a new change on the same material; M21 starts a sequential passage (the term is to be explained in a moment), pushing the goal forward to M24, where a two-measure sequence sets a fresh goal at M26. There the material of M3-M11 drives us from sub-goal to sub-goal, and so on to the end of the piece.

Sequences, such as we find at M21-M23 and M24-M25, are particularly effective in maintaining the sense of approach to a goal, while postponing arrival there. Examining these groups in detail, one finds that each note of M22 is a degree lower than the corresponding note in M21; and that M23 bears the same relation to M22. Thus, if M21 finds its goal in M22, M22 will lead us with the same cogency to M23, and first note of M24 will become the goal of the whole group. Examine M24-M25 for the same conditions and results. Sequences very rarely contain over three full units; but the units may be of any length, and the staff-degree difference of the units is not restricted to a single step. Also the pattern-progress may be up or down. In the Bach *Invention*, if we chose to regard M5-M6 as a sequence, we should note that the second unit is two degrees distant from the first.

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The obviousness of the facts and features of the fore-

going outline may well have prompted the suspicion that the piece was chosen so as to make things easy for author and reader. Instead of presenting disclaimers, we shall next consider a composition of Bach which could, under no possible circumstances be regarded as a simple subject of consideration: the *Eleventh Three-Part Invention, in G Minor*. With no actual evidence at hand, we may nevertheless readily believe that this little piece has been the "despair" and the inspiration of tens of thousands of on-coming students of composition during the two centuries which have elapsed since it was written. And the fact that Bach may have tossed it off in half an hour one morning as material for the day's practice of one of his gifted sons (and there is ample evidence that both Wilhelm Friedmann Bach and Philip Emmanuel Bach used it in that way and subjected their pupils to it) is as good a proof as can be adduced that John Sebastian Bach was a towering genius. As to the *Inventions*, the composer set this on their title-page: "A Straightforward Introduction, by which lovers of the Clavier, but especially those eager to learn, may be shown a clear method of learning not only how to play two parts clearly, but also, when further advanced, how to deal correctly and well with three essential parts; and, incidentally, may likewise not only be able to procure good *Inventions* but also become able to perform them well, but, most of all, may attain a singing style of playing and, along with that, a strong foretaste of composition." If the Ambitious Listener finds himself keenly interested in this *Invention*, he may confidently proceed toward a comfortable mastery in listening. If not, it is suggested that he give himself large

doses of *Two-Part* and *Three-Part Inventions* of Bach, until at least a few thrills result from hearing this *Eleventh Three-Part Invention*.

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This seventy-two measure piece has a self-developing theme, embodying grace and plaintiveness (and perhaps poignancy). This theme keeps postponing arrival at a goal until it has attained a maturity of eight measures. Meanwhile the two other voices have sung the theme-germ (motive), the middle voice endowing it with an additional hang-on-and-release idea with which we can imagine Bach to have been rather pleased if he wasn't in too great a hurry; for it is to enrich the *Invention* at many points and is to allow itself also to be variously enriched. This hang-on-and-release practice pervades all significant music in one form or another. Dissonances, more or less harsh or violent, are features of it. The listener needs to observe it and to become, if not already, sensitive to it; but he does not have to know anything about the terminology of it (Suspensions, Resolutions, Delayed Resolutions, Chords of the Seventh and their straight and kaleidoscopic Resolutions) in order to appreciate it just as fully as one who knows about it technically. He may be interested to look these things up; but that is his personal affair. Fortunately, practically every kind of phenomenon of this class appears in this *Eleventh Invention*, and the listener can clear up the whole subject, from the observational and appreciational standpoint, at once. Or, if there happens to be anything omitted here, it can be found in the equally wonderful *Ninth Three-Part Invention in F Minor*.

At M9 of our *Eleventh* the germ-theme (motive) appears in every measure until M14 inclusive, making a sequential effect, but really bringing on a series of harmonies of the kaleidoscopic nature mentioned above. At M17 a genuine sequence, on a two-measure unit, begins, modified as to its third member in M22, in preparation for the goalfulness of M23, as M24 is the objective. The held note of the Bass (M24-M28) has latent goalfulness, revealing its dénouement in M29. The marvellously grown melodic bouquet (or is it woven tapestry?) of M24-M29 maintains a varied charm. At M30 we are again at a beginning; but M33-M35 offer a fascinatingly novel ending. Note the astoundingly cogent goalfulness of the running bass figure which fills M36-M40; then the fantastically original contribution of the middle voice during the following sequence (M41-M43), and the flavoring which the flatted note in M45 ("merely a Neapolitan Sixth," says the unimpressed technician) gives to the cadence ending at M48. A three-measure sequence (M50-M52) and then another (M53-M55), with a pair of richly adequate transitional measures (M55-M56), bring on a repetition of M24-M29 in M57-M62, now expanded by two measures (M63-M64) which prepare the final statement of the theme, duly cadenced in M71 toward the final unison.

Our comment is far from complete, and could be extended through several pages. If, however, we point out a few of the most characteristic places where the goalfulness of individual parts brings into association strikingly dissonant tones, we shall perhaps be doing the immediately essential thing:

M4, no purely consonant notes whatever until the third beat; M6, sternly harsh dissonance at beginning; M11, no consonance until third beat; M18, middle note of bass an intruder; M20, ditto; M23, no consonance anywhere; M33, consonance only on third beat; M38, consonance for one-third of measure only; M40, ditto; M49, thin, and largely dissonant; M51, ditto; M64-M65, empty; M68, like M4; M70, like M6; and, in many measures not cited, 40 to 50 per cent of dissonant tones.

If this *Invention* sounds good throughout to a hearer, there is only one possible reason: that hearer possesses the ability to accept associated goalful non-periodic melodies as expressive, even to the liberal sacrifice of that itemized euphony which dominates the music which anybody can understand. To the learner this piece presents a definite task: that of making it sound good to himself. If it does not yet sound good, his task is to increase his familiarity with it until he likes it throughout. That task can probably be accomplished by at least 999 in every 1000 persons who care at all for music, with existing facilities for the mechanical performance of music.

Of course no one would suggest attacking this task as a stunt. If the power to understand polyphonic diction did not bring great and varied enjoyment, if it did not infinitely increase the learner's capacity for inspiring and thrilling experience through the art of music, there would certainly be no reason for giving studious attention to such works as this *Invention*. Again, if it were not the case that *only* through understanding polyphonic music can one open the sole absolutely inexhaustible supply of joy-producing works of the art, one might spare himself whatever effort is involved in attaining that understanding. But we have nearly four centuries of human testimony to confirm the statement

that engrossing and abiding joy in musical experience can be attained only through the specific kind of polyphonic susceptibility which we are here trying to isolate and describe. And, as a good way to describe a force is to show its effect, so also a good way to describe a receptivity is to point out definitely some representative things to which the receptivity reacts. This is of course a method of indirection; perhaps it is like Development by Reversal. But has not someone rightly said that the thing most like a hump is a dent?

* * * *

In the domain of polyphonic music we still have one representative form to exemplify. The rest—and there are many—may be left to the student to examine for himself; but the Fugue calls for description. Here again, of course, presentation of the object itself is the only satisfactory definition. “A composition in which the individual parts come in one after another”—so begins a popular definition; and the joker’s finish of the same (“and the hearers go out one after another”) looks like a complete justification of the title of this part of our book.

Because the Fugue is the next-to-strictest form of composition (Canon being the strictest), its formal elements can be, and ordinarily are, strongly emphasized in any presentation of it. Also, the successful writing of a fugue is shown as a primarily intellectual feat. One who thinks of Bach’s great fugues, or of anybody’s great fugues, as feats, is seriously in error; great fugues are direct, spontaneous expressions of the creative spirit in as full a sense as any other composition, and embody emotion, mood,

atmosphere in proportion to their quality as compositions, quite independently of the form in which they are cast. It is true that few composers known to modern hearers have attained this complete command of the Fugue as a means of expression. Beethoven confessedly did not care to. But that does not alter the facts about Bach's spontaneity of expression in that form. It is also true, by the way, that one of the final tests of organized musical attention is its power to react to the mood, the emotional content (automatically seizing the technical content) of a full-fledged fugue. Such power is not to be gained in a week; but it certainly can be developed by the average music-lover without permanently furrowing or heightening his brow.

* * * *

The *Second Fugue* in the *First Book* of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavichord* can serve as our example. The key is C Minor. Note the goalfulness of its theme (often called, in speaking of a fugue, the Subject) embodied in four of its twenty notes—the fifth, tenth, fifteenth, and final twentieth, Ab, G, F, Eb; we say *final*, because the scale beginning in M3 merely carries on, clearing away obstacles, as it were, for a high jump to begin an individualized countertheme (countersubject) consisting of three four-note units, the goalfulness of which is embodied its fourth, eighth, and twelfth notes, Bb, F#, G. A three-member ascending sequence fills all of M5 and half of M6; and the little scale-wise, dovetailing phrase of the lower voice may safely be called one of the most dazzlingly scintillating melodic ideas ever uttered by anybody. Temptation to expatiate on it shall be resisted; and, by the way, its qualities as an idea

do not come fully into evidence until one sees the rôle it plays as middle voice in M17-M18, and as bass in M18-M19.

Just at the end of M6 we see a specimen of what was in mind when we mentioned such things as ellipsis, interruption, truncation in polyphonic melody, and the resultant demand for constant alertness on the hearer's part. The last two notes in M7 and the first note in M8 (lower voice) are the goal-end, an octave higher, of the scale-passage which has just been interrupted. If that scale came to its local finish, a smoke-screen would be thrown across the opening through which the third voice is ready to emerge with its first statement of the subject. Its début would be spoiled. Precisely by the transfer of goal-end to upper octave, at which the appreciative listener shouts a mental "Hi, there!" at the composer, Bach sets in brilliant relief this first utterance of the bass; for that voice, in furnishing, "while you wait," the conventional goal-end of the scale-phrase, also provides a delightful shock by omitting all ceremony and proceeding at once with what it was intending to say.

How many tens of thousands of such inspired (or clever) bits are contained in Bach's works, nobody will ever undertake to prove by enumeration. The joy of them lies not in labelling and describing, but in experiencing. The millions of them that exist in all music supply, as was implied above, the only inexhaustible spring of musical delight. And the everlastingly renewable discovery of charm in already familiar works is another feature of prospective experience. The Ambitious Listener may well bear in mind a remark of a violist who had sat, during a half-

century of active musical life, in orchestras of three continents under conductors of both local and international fame. This player had doubtless heard, in rehearsal and performance, Beethoven's "*Eroica*" *Symphony* as many as two hundred times. "Yet," said he, "every performance of it reveals some bit of beauty which I had not before perceived."

But to continue our running comment on the *C Minor Fugue*. While the bass is stating the subject in M7-M8, the soprano has the countersubject and the middle voice, for the most part, fragments of the same. The sequence which fills M9-M10, and half of M11 (note the dovetailing with the opening of Section 2 at M11) has its members tied together with a neatly devised scale-passage in the bass, where rises and dips correspond to dips and rises in a sequence which will appear in M13-M14 as soon as the main subject has had its say, in a new mode, in M11-M12. The middle voice brings the subject in M15-M16, counterthemes now having a new distribution. The material of M5-M11, extended, inverted, sequentialized and cadentialized, ornamented noticeably with fragments snipped from the main subject, leads to the beginning of Section 3 at M20; and still on, finally, to the first chord of M25. The next measure-and-a-half of near-sequence with a running bass that ties the newly-combined fragments together, prepares for the apparently final appearance of the main theme in the lowest register. Then the cadence, ending at mid-point of M29, and a postluding statement of the main theme, with chords somewhat enriched for the occasion by added voices.

Many noteworthy points have been omitted from our

comment, especially the frequent ellipsis of the last note of the four-note phrases in the countersubject, and the driving force of M24. The observer may perhaps welcome freedom to look for these things on his own account.

He may also be interested, perhaps, to seek for examples, in this polyphonic music, of other kinds of Thematic Development than those we found most clearly exemplified in the Beethoven *Larghetto*: 13, Development by Fugal Treatment; 14, by Canonic Treatment; 15, by Interval Modification; 16, by Prolongation; 17, by Diminution; 18, by Change of Harmony. Indeed, he may wish to add to our list; or to make subdivisions, as we have done in listing both Rhythm-Modification and Rhythm-Intensification. In tracing the organic connection between any part of a work and any other part, the observer is spending his time to the very best musical advantage. It is probably that kind of thing that the experienced violist chiefly "heard out" during his last fifty hearings of Beethoven's "*Eroica*."

* * * *

We have now examined three purely polyphonic works of John Sebastian Bach. It must not be forgotten, however, that Bach is said to have done so many and varied things in music that nothing has been written since his day which is not a development of something to be found somewhere in the works of Bach. There is no need of arguing as to the literal truth of this statement. Its general acceptance up to about 1900 is enough to justify many hunting-trips in Bach preserves. We shall make one or two. But we need not expect to find there exotic specimens. Bach did not invent polyphony; in fact, like Shakespeare—also like Mozart—

he invented very little. Writing "Inventions" does not imply being an inventor; it merely implies playing the fugue-game under liberally relaxed rules. Bach made sensational and sweeping inventive revision of methods of playing keyboard instruments, and seems to have been prouder of achievements in that line than of anything else. It may even be suspected that the courtly Philip Emmanuel Bach had a higher opinion of his father as a player of clavier and organ than as a composer. At any rate, as a composer, John Sebastian *did*, rather than *devised*. He borrowed plans from everywhere, and borrowed styles to as great an extent as his own ingrained stylistic habits permitted. He was rarely if ever as inane as some of his adulated or justly admired contemporaries and predecessors, even when imitating to the limit their more or less brilliant patter-talk. The fact that Händel lived between practically the same dates shows that, while Bach had universality, he did not exhaust the material which the musical universe could furnish. And yet his unique position is due more to his exhaustiveness than to any other of his qualities. Living at a time when scales and modes, major and minor as we know them, were organizing and settling themselves in the consciousness of the occident, he accepted every task that search or chance revealed, and performed each with ultimate mastery and thoroughness. He thus widened and confirmed the bounds of key-sense (tonality) and mode-sense (modality) to such a degree that innovators in these basic domains have had to adopt thug-methods and smash things.*

*This of course is not illegal. A benignant messianic creator-reformer may look like a desperado, because his costume and make-up, including whiskers, dirk and gun, are all superadded by the shocked

Whenever Bach ran upon a mechanical, physical, or compositional device, ability, or procedure—like, for instance, the Stradivarius violin, Tartini's technique, or Equal Temperament—he seized it as a famished beast might seize a morsel of highly nourishing food and (to maintain the simile) chewed upon it until all its life-giving properties had been extracted,—that is, expressed. Thus, today, the *Solo Violin Sonatas* of Bach still offer the supreme tasks to masters of that instrument, and the *Well-Tempered Clavichord* and the *Art of Fugue* still remain the *ne plus ultra* compendia of contrapuntal achievement.

sensibilities of neighbors. (By the way, Bach shocked *his* neighbors.) In a way, art is like war: people act and think by impulse, not reason; everybody fights to maintain or attain peace; the means employed are fair and honest only if conveniently possible; and the innovator is "the enemy."

SPOTTING THE SIGNIFICANT

WE have now arrived at a You-may-fire-when-ready,-Gridley moment; but that moment as we have envisaged it, initiates a sporting event, not a battle. We are going to try to explain the significance of some music which is apparently insignificant or non-significant. Fortunately we do not have to go to a second-rater for our specimen. We choose the *Prelude* to John Sebastian Bach's *Third English Suite*—called English because Bach followed the general style and groupings of movements prevailing in the suites of English composers.

* * * *

The three-note motive of this prelude is as simple as the four-note motive which opens Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*; it might, in fact, be called precisely one note simpler. There is nothing of the *Fifth's* portentousness in this theme's announcement; it appears to be merely "something to get going with." There is ample charm, for a while at least, in the chug-chug-chug of the basic rhythm, and the composer produces in the nick of time a grace-chord dovetailing extension of the motive (first beat of M25, M27, M29) which would strike almost anybody as being a bright idea. But all the sixteenth-note material might be classified as "filler" by even a friendly listener. What interest, then, lies in this first page? Why should it have been written? As most of its subject matter appears twice again during the

Prelude, Bach must have thought that there was some justification for its existence.

In giving an answer, we are likely to meet two baffling difficulties: the routined pianist, who is able to play the piece well, needing no explanation, and perhaps even being impatient of all explanations of the (to him) obvious, will exclaim "superfluous;" the non-playing listener, seeing, on the one hand, the simplicity of the explanation, and realizing, on the other hand, how little any such considerations would probably have to do with his enjoyment of anything, will exclaim "foolish," or perhaps "hopeless." To the routined pianist one may make the rejoinder that his full understanding of other than piano music depends on his observation along lines which we are about to suggest; while the non-performer may be told that he is only one lap behind the performer in the particular race which two minds are running, the understanding of the Bach *Prelude* being the goal; and that in another race, where ability to play the piano had nothing to do with the case, the non-performer might easily outdistance the performer.

We seem to be proposing to attempt to explain the inexplicable, or as some wag has put it, "to unscrew the inscrutable." This fascinating game has interested philosophers since the beginning of recorded time, and playing it, even in an amateur way, is often fruitful. The fact that many philosophers fail to muster a long procession of followers need not daunt us. If we arrive *toward* a point of comprehension, we may at least discover why nobody arrives *at* one—which is the regular thing about philosophy, as about life in general, anyway.

In fact, we are bravely, but perhaps too slowly, pressing onward toward some consideration, in a later volume of this Series, of "Music that nobody can understand;" and we are even cherishing hardy hopes of showing its reason for being. A possible result may be the Ambitious Listener's actual enjoyment of some un-understandable music — or, at any rate, a keen selective interest in it. We shall certainly fail if the Ambitious Listener balks at entering the road which we now indicate, with an apparently insignificant work of Bach pasted for observation on the first sign-board. Furthermore, we shall keep to the main highway toward the capital city in the Kingdom of the Un-understood, regretfully omitting several attractive side-trips to lesser cities and rural areas of that realm. Progress will not be easy, because attention must be of the keenest. But have we not again and again said or implied that one cannot gravitate into high delights?

* * * *

Continuing our consideration of the Bach Prelude, we note that it is to be played at the rate of seventy-six measures to the minute and will be all over in less than three minutes. Any performer may play it faster than that if his technique permits, as he may wish to impart qualities of nimbleness, brilliancy, delicacy, dash, vigor, limpidity to the interpretation, as occasion may offer. At that speed the commonplace bass of M16-M21 can be endowed with thematic personality since, as it were, the hearer doesn't bother to compare the width of the measure-to-measure skip with that of the original motive pattern. This speed consideration may enter also into the general frame-up of the First Sec-

tion, which ends with the first note of M33. There are seventeen measures of sequence (M8-M13, M16-M21, M23-M27); six "carry-on" or cadential measures (M7, M15, M23-M27); leaving only ten measures of individual thematic or counterthematic substance. Obviously, this is pabulum for the mentally relaxed. But nothing that we have mentioned is the major feature of page 1. That feature is the deploying of the entire instrumental and performing material. It is the stating of subject-matter, in a purely musical sense; and the subject-matter includes *primarily* the instrument and the performer. Section I is *Arma virumque cano* said in music, by music, with music, through music, within music, concerning music, because of music, in accordance with music; and said for and to the musically sensitive only. It exists independently of and in spite of anything but music. Anyone who enjoys it may know that he is enjoying music as music, and anyone who is bored by it may know that he is being bored by music as music.

* * * *

Queries naturally arise, if the reader thinks it worth while to give the statement attention: Was Bach aware of this? Did Bach think about anything like this? The answer is: Of course not. Bach thought only of writing a piece of music that suited him as he conceived or listened to it. He put into it what he felt like putting into it, and left out of it what he felt like leaving out of it. His only guide was genius, which automatically put at his disposal an infinitely comprehensive, differentiated, and graduated command of the material of music. Another query: Is

the performer aware of this? The answer is: He certainly does not have to be. A quite sufficient result for him is the intuitive or acquired perception that the piece brings him a delightful sense of satisfaction in playing or in having played it. Yet another query: If neither Bach nor the performer thought about these things, why should anybody think about them? The answer is: Because the seeker after enjoyment through listening is neither a master-composer nor a master-performer. His task is neither to compose with enjoyment nor to perform with enjoyment, but to hear with enjoyment. With composer and performer enjoyment is based on congenital, acquired and developed ability to endow a work with qualities and to manifest the same: the composer enjoys putting qualities into a work, and the performer enjoys bringing them out. The listener's enjoyment is conditioned on (first) knowing what there is in the work in order that (second) he may enjoy observing the performer get that out of it. Also, if he enjoys the performance but does not enjoy the work, he wants to know why; and if he enjoys the work but doesn't enjoy the performance, he wants to know why. That's a reason why it is worth while to think about "these things," and about a good many other things which will steer the Ambitious Listener toward what is in the work as well as steer him away from what isn't.

* * * *

Returning still again to the Bach *Prelude*, we give specifications as to the deploying of material. The instrument for which Bach wrote had a gamut which extended from C below that bass clef to C above the treble clef, four

octaves and a note. It is true that M115 shows an A below this limit; but the gamut was growing—and the bottom note of the chord can be spared, anyway. It is also true that Section 1 does not call for use of the two top notes of the instrument, but that hardly vitiates the statement that the whole instrument is deployed. The simplest specialties of the instrument, running passages and chords, are featured in almost continuous contrast. The main theme, starting in a medium upper register and bodying itself into chords, is developed in a straight line into the deepest register. An almost stepwise, but not arid, countersubject meanwhile ascends to the top of the instrument, from which point, with sequential returns for fresh starts, it tracks over every step of the scale-gamut (the join between clefs at M7 is perfect) to the very lowest note. Later the embodied chords make climactic ascent, while a running scale-wise bass works and re-works the low registers.

Section 2 (M33) endows the motive with a real counter-subject, and that subject takes on a snap-of-the-whip beginning to individualize itself further in M135 and M143. A rapid tilting figure appears in sequences (M145-M152 and M155-M163)—an adequate section-enrichment drawn from the standard stock supply of primary finger-and-wrist ideas. Section 3 (M67) works the material of Section 1 afresh from end to end of the gamut. Section 4 (M99) deals with the material of Section 2, but also gives the low chords a chance which they have been waiting for: to move, by deliberate development of the main motive (M101-M115) over the entire ground from extreme top to extreme bottom of the instrument. Now chord and scale have equal rank. Sec-

tion 5 (M125) presents new phases of material from Section 2. Section 6 (M161), after making trills an introductory feature, arrives (M180) at what turns out to be an inverted start on a recapitulation of Section 1,—quite worthy, by the way, of comparison with the “veiled” returns of Beethoven and of that specialist in such things, Johannes Brahms.

But for one feature, all this might become repetitious and monotonous. That one feature is the generous and general exploitation of keys and modes which Bach puts through along with thorough exploitation of idea and instrument. A half-dozen consecutive playings of the piece, at speed, may cause boredom; but the seventh playing, twenty-four hours later, will give one of the best possible revelations of the magic which artistically discreet devicefulness can work upon material which, to all outward appearances, is unpromising. The line of demarcation between artistic discretion and inspiration is an imaginary line drawn, for himself, by each imaginative observer—and it is movable.

* * * *

It would have been inexcusable to devote so much space and side-talk to this Prelude, except in preparation for the statement of an important principle. The only difference between the Bach *Prelude* and many another master-work is the obviousness of the working of the material—within the scope of the piece, of course. It is a case, in Polyphonic Music, like that of *The Harmonious Blacksmith* in Homophonic Music. Exactly the qualities which we have outlined as possessed by this work are the qualities which determine the term of life of any composition whatsoever.

Here we are again, talking about Purveyance. Originality and beauty of theme can provide vitality, but not viability; nor, of course, can mere novelty of any description. On the other hand, mere working of material, without power to invent or choose suitable material to work, can produce no resultant viability, because the thing produced is languishing or dead at birth. The String Quartets of Schumann and any piece of *Kapellmeistermusik* may be cited to support the statements made in the previous two sentences. Of all possible fields for theses by prospective Doctors of Philosophy in Music, there is none which seems to offer richer opportunities than the field which may be named the Economics of Genius. The dozens of reputations which have faded during the last four decades (or any four decades, for that matter) have proceeded, or are proceeding, toward oblivion for no other reasons than those which we have just been discussing. And the waxing of other reputations, or the quite possible revival of now-forgotten works, has followed or will follow the gradual discovery by the musically sensitive that there is a finer economic balance between matter and treatment than that attained by some once-preferred or now-preferred rivals.

One can hardly over-emphasize another point which remains questionable with a noticeably large number of music-lovers: that the joy-giving essence of music lies in music; that consequently the thing to be keen about in a piece or a work is the music that is in it; that what music means is what it says in tone,—and whatever the hearer can make it signify in the career of what we helplessly name his soul. Some anticipatory and unsupported statements to

this effect were made in earlier pages. Some evidence, specimen and comment, has now been offered. We leave the subject and continue our trip toward perhaps broader conclusions. We have implicitly, if not directly, explained one fact: that musicians rarely talk about what a work means, but only about what it strikes them as being, and that many of them are irritatingly—or irritatedly—laconic when questioned about a master-work or a novelty.

* * * *

Considerations of brevity prompt us to reduce to a minimum our selection of representative works. There would, however, be suppression of an essential, if we failed to cite one work of Bach based on periodic melody. In fact, while showing the blend of homophonic and polyphonic, we shall be in advantageous position to consider further at least one vital point already treated. We choose the *Gavotte* from the *Sixth English Suite*. As to the *Gavotte* form, information is so readily available as to all the dance-forms that we shall say nothing, especially as other features of this little work have much greater importance for us than the form of it.

We pause for a moment to pick up a loose end, and to justify the omission of the nineteen pages earlier mentioned.

In connection with the Mozart *Rondo*, we advised the Ambitious Listener to notice certain phrases and figures which were continually “bobbing up,” so to speak, in connection with the themes and side-themes. We are now ready to “classify and rationalize” these as bits of Non-Periodic Melody. A single replaying of that work, from our present standpoint, will readily confirm this statement. .

There is practically no music that does not contain snatches, at least, of Non-Periodic Melody. If a work shows that kind of melody as a dominant feature, we classify it as Polyphonic; if, on the other hand, Periodic Melody is dominant, we classify as Homophonic. Sometimes these elements are in so nearly equal quantity that classification would be difficult. But classification is of no importance, after it has served the purpose of helping us to hear what the work says.

* * * *

In the serial measure-numbering of the *Gavotte*, we omit the opening half-measure, and make the first whole measure Number One. This is standard procedure. The other half of the really first measure is M8A, or, as a finality of the First Section, M8B; while M8C symmetrically begins the Second Section and finds its complement in M32A. The *Musette* (*Gavotte II*) portion of the piece shows the same symmetrical division. The various starting- and ending-points lie in M8, M16, M24, M32, M40, M48, M56, showing a series of "four-twos-in-two-fours-in-one-eight" units. We here recognize the chief characteristic of Periodic Melody, which is of course also, with derived features, the salient characteristic of Homophony. The circuit-shunting polyphonic switch which Bach throws on at M16, letting non-periodic current flow for four measures, gives zest to a partial return to normal in M20. There is a polyphonic aftermath. In fact, once on the stage as co-star in the melody, polyphony makes only "false" exits, and lingers about in the background of the scene until Bach, sweetly but firmly, orders it off with one of his everlastingly

memorable dramatic gestures, the plain chords in M31-M32. If the observer seeks a concrete interpretation, it is permissible to attribute a slow "you get out" (*ach, geh' doch!*) to the immortal John Sebastian, as Bach is thereby imagined to be talking *to* music *through* music. (Leipzig papers will please copy.)

The first polyphonic element of the piece is the running bass which fills M1-M14. The Ambitious Listener can find, in this innocent looking affair, typical material for observation,—typical because it exemplifies the everywhere-prevailing interest with which a master-composer can endow non-periodic melody. It fairly bristles with the goalfulness which we have mentioned as the one ever-present feature of that kind of melody,—including a specimen of single-note goalfulness. "Inexhaustible," "infinite,"—these are adjectives often applied to the resources of polyphony. Nobody should be expected to accept, without evidence, such superlatives as applicable. If this *Gavotte* is to be regarded as typical (and we present it as so to be regarded), the most elementary use of reasoning processes will bring conviction that the superlatives apply literally. In fact, the first thirty-three notes give ample basis for that conclusion.

Bach set down these notes without any indication of how they should be grouped; or, to put it in technical talk, how they should be phrased. It is not worth forty lines to say or surmise why he didn't phrase them. Now, no melodic utterance has any musical meaning worth mentioning until it is phrased. There are many ways of projecting phrasing; which results in great differences in teachers and performers. There are many ways of phrasing the same

thing; which results in great differences in interpreters. Phrasing is the essence of all distinctness, of all distinctiveness, of all distinction in thought and rendering. People may differ widely and variously as to the phrasing of this or that passage of non-periodic melody; but, unless it is phrased in some way, it can become merely sound. Until each and every note of it is a member of some phrase, nobody can know its tone-meaning. Until its tone-meaning is known, nobody has any basis for experiencing its art-meaning, if it has any. Nor has anybody any basis for wishing that it might have been said in some other tones.

A rough-and-ready example from language may clarify the statements about tone-meaning. Hamlet walks on the stage, buried in thought, and, after a while, says: "To be, or not to be; that is the question." Now, unless the auditor knows that Hamlet is saying, in substance, "I cannot decide whether to commit suicide or not," he has no basis whatever for appreciating or judging either author or actor. The thing to marvel at, of course, is that Shakespeare's genius prompted him to put that and thousands of other ordinary ideas, hosts of which can be picked out of any literary dump-heap, into such connections and in such words as to make succeeding generations eager to hear them said by people who can act and wear clothes with sufficient skill to appear to be Hamlet and others come to life. Anybody can get some enjoyment out of seeing *Hamlet*, if for no other reason than that he will hear a lot of things said which he has seen or heard quoted. But, unless he is able to know, at each and every instant, the plain, ordinary sense of what he hears, he cannot get full enjoyment of the play; nor can

he successfully or fitly cerebrate or emotionalize (do we dare say "emote?") about either the work or its author. He cannot even begin to marvel at what is most worth marvelling at.

In general, by the way, the treasurable experience is not to have seen Mr. X in *Hamlet*, but to have seen Hamlet in Mr. X. This latter does not often happen, partly because of Mr. X, and partly because of the auditor. Whether or not it happens has no connection with the comparative size of the billboard letters which give the names of Mr. X and Shakespeare,—that is, if Shakespeare gets mentioned at all. This will perhaps remind the Ambitious Listener of what we earlier said about certain incidental difficulties which beset him as he looks about him in the publicity-beridden world.

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It perhaps seems that we are loading a heavy artillery piece when a popgun might serve as well or better. It would, except for the fact that we want to shoot once *for* all, *at* all, and have it all over with. In some cases, when the missile explodes, the reader will find nothing lying about except suggestions to do what he has already done with dozens or hundreds of works: a popgun would have shot much more than is new. For the musically inexperienced, on the other hand, the contents of the shell may seem to be a huge assemblage of scrappy fragments labelled: "To be sorted as per instructions attached to sample." Recognizing these possibilities, we pull the lanyard.

* * * *

The typical passage of thirty-three notes ends at mid-

point of M4. Following are some of the possible phrasings; by serial numbers of the notes:

- A: Straight through by twos, 1-2, 3-4, etc., with 33 phrased ahead;
- B: Straight through by fours, 1-4, 5-8, etc., with 33 phrased ahead;
- C: Straight through by twos, note 1 setting the key: 1, 2-3, 4-5, etc.;
- D: Straight through by fours, note 1 setting the key: 1, 2-5, 6-9, etc.;
- E: 1-7, 8-15, 16-29, 30-33 and on;
- F: 1-7, 8-15, 16-21, 22-29, 30-33 and on;
- G: 1-6, 7-14, 15-22, 23-30, 30-33 and on;
- H: 1, 2-5, 6-7, 8-13, 14-15, 16-29, 30-33;
- I: 1-15, 16-30, 31-33 and on;
- J: 1-14, 15-30, 31-33 and on;
- K: 1-13, 14-29, 30-33 and on;
- L: 1-5, 6-13, 14-21, 22-29, 30-33 and on;
- M: 1-5, 6-13, 14-23, 24-31, 32-33 and on;
- N: 1-9, 10-17, 18-21, 22-25, 26-33;

and anywhere from a few to many more by mergings or divisions of some of the shorter or longer units of the above.

As we think through Form H, we find it natural to conceive two or more instruments replying to, or vieing or co-operating with each other or one another. Once started on that course of thought, we may fancy that we hear various tone-qualities; viola, violoncello, contrabass, bassoon, clarinet, bass clarinet, English horn, kettledrum, bass drum, or even a cymbal tapped with a stick. This will depend on the richness of experience and fullness of hearing developed by listening to such works as the *Brandenburg Concerti* of Bach, the *Concerti* of Händel, the *Choral Preludes* of Bach; or to monster-works like Bach's *B-Minor Mass*, *St. Matthew Passion*; Mozart's *Requiem*; Beethoven's *Mass in D* or *Ninth Symphony*; or, of lesser scope, Brahms's *German Requiem*.

We are thus suggesting the applicable truth of two quite different general thoughts: first, that one gets out of anything what he puts into it; second, that a great work means what it means beside what it actually says. We see also the reality of what is known as Creative Listening. If it turns out that Form H suggests duality, the first note gets phrase identity, and is a sample of one-note non-periodic melody,—just a fairly good sample only, not nearly as brilliant as some we might quote, or as the Ambitious Listener will find for himself. •

From F on, all the forms are reasonable enough, note No. 16 disturbing our grouping-activity at times. Forms A to D merely follow even rhythm-divisions of the periodic melody, and this prevents the lower voice from contributing rhythmical variety. Any phrasing which does not link the first and fifth notes of each measure will probably be finally rejected. Expressiveness of the whole is greater when the non-periodic melody's goals are not coincident with the phrase-ends of the periodic.

We may now give a not-necessarily adequate reason why Bach did not put expression-marks in this work—or hosts of others; he had had several kinds of fun, including perhaps some agreeable yawns, in writing it, and he left to the hearers to have as many as possible of their personal kinds of fun or yawns in listening to it. In any case, he felt no need of bothering further than to get the notes of it on paper.

* * * *

If the alternatives mentioned above are possible in a few measures where only one voice is involved, it is obvious

that infinity will be the approximate mathematical result when the number of voices makes the multiplicand, the number of works makes the multiplier, and the law of permutations exercises its inflating influence. And perhaps the Ambitious Listener can now sense the literal truth of the statement that the discovery of Counterpoint, with the resultant polyphonic practice, enabled music to become the Art Universal which it is now reputed to be.

The on-coming student or observer to whom this phase of the subject is new, may be discouraged at the apparent magnitude of the task of becoming an efficient listener. So might a child be dismayed on being told the number of millions of times he will have to draw his breath if he wants to keep on living until he's a nice old man like grandpa. He has not yet the experience which automatically tells him that nature will see to it that much of the enormous task is performed from minute to minute. All his mentors will have to do is to drive the youngster out into the fresh air and induce him to breathe fully instead of partly. With a human phenomenon like Mozart, the parallelism is exact between drawing the breath and absorbing the essence of music. With most of us there are initial inhibitions, which have to be overcome by various means, including especially giving the closest and the most studious attention to repeated performances of great representative works. In some cases a musical environment is itself an inhibition, if in that environment only second- or third-rate products or personalities exist. It is vitally necessary that the Ambitious Listener become intimate with the actual features of composition and performance which make superior things su-

perior. If he knows what to look for and then proceeds to look for it, he becomes a good candidate for a lengthy and richly enjoyable musical life. In this matter of phrasing of polyphonic music, for instance, if he drives himself or somebody drives him to organize in his mind each and every note of three or four standard polyphonic works, he will find nature making his task increasingly easy with such speed that he will wonder whence comes his power to "line up" an unfamiliar composition of that type. We repeat again here what has perhaps often enough been said before: his own interpretation, if it includes every note of the work, is better than any "authoritative" interpretation of which any detail seems to him inane or affected.

* * * *

We are still far from exhausting possibilities of comment on the Bach *Gavotte*, but leave to the reader further examination, along suggested lines, of M5 to M32A. The second half (or middle third; for the first half is supposed to be replayed in conclusion) of the piece contains such fruitful material that we must use it to make at least one point that has to be treated somewhere.

But first a word of explanation about these second halves of dance-forms. They embody the impulse of the composer to do something, new as to key or mode and purely musical, with his material. The first half might be said to be the occasion to say something, while the second half is an excuse for saying something more. In the first half, the treatment is incidental to the theme, whereas in the second half the theme is incidental to the treatment. *Musette* means bagpipe. This instrument was high enough

in the esteem of the French to have been the subject of a folio treatise, with plates, published at Lyons in 1672, thirteen years before Bach was born. The feminine ornaments of Louis XIV's court learned to play it, and Watteau (1684-1721) painted things about it and about the dances it accompanied. Whether it was or was not a dignified subject would, however, have made no difference to Bach. All was grist that came to his mill.

We have spoken of possible instrumental suggestions which the musically imaginative may find in those first thirty-three notes of this piece. In the second half we find Bach representing not merely one instrument by another totally different one, but also, very definitely, representing two voice parts by the one-voice lower part; that is, the left hand says one part but means two. Bach did the same with the tilting phrase (M45) of the *G Minor Prelude*, but we were busy with other things there. Here we get the drone bass of the bagpipe plus a melody (periodic, by the way) which can be definitely extracted from the left-hand part by omitting all the drone D's. It can be written down by anybody who remembers enough of his public school training in musical dictation to attach stems and hooks to properly located note-heads in a four-four measure.

The task of the Ambitious Listener is to know this melody completely. When familiar with it, there will perhaps be pleasure in hearing it along with the tune of the *Gavotte*. At M37-M39 he will be listening to music which few understand. At M47 there is another dash of the same thing, but here there is hope that the quaint wiggly ornamentation of the melody may tease the balky toward want-

ing to understand. At M54-M55 there is a bit of piquant awkwardness which can give a thrill like the one which the properly sensitized can get from a glance at a Fragonard (1732-1806) miniature, judging by what the Brothers Goncourt say in "The Art of the Eighteenth Century." Their phrase is "a fine and delicious tickling of the look." M54-M55 finely and deliciously tickle the listen.

The hearer is now before an exquisite dish. Is there joy for him in tasting it?

Joy, if any, will not issue from the naked tone-product, which is at times certainly very ugly. Joy will depend: on whether he reacts with pleasure to Bach's suggestion of a continuous bagpipe bass projected by the repeated tones of a refined instrument of percussion which cannot sustain a tone and therefore repeats it; on whether he finds monotony or portrayal in that repetition; on whether he detects originality or inanity, force or weakness, relevancy or redundancy in the countermelody which persists in reaching its goals with total disregard of the drone-bass but with clinging affection for the theme; on whether the maintenance of independence by all three elements attracts or repels, soothes or irritates; or whether, after the piece is lodged in his consciousness, he finds that every tiny note of it is set like the petals of a perfect rose, in just the best position to feed the ear with radiance and the soul with fragrance, or finds that little or none of it has significance. In a word, joy cannot come unless the piece manages to mean something besides what it says.

* * * *

It would seem to be possible now to isolate the basic

personal problem of the Ambitious Listener. Thus far we have been marshaling several facts and a few fancies. The procedure is now confessed to have been strategical. A capture has been planned. The Ambitious Listener is the victim. He is now in the prisoner's pen, exactly where we want him, before a door through which one enters the domain of wide musical experience. We are ready to unlock that door, to dismiss the guards, and to show the victim that the back wall of the pen consists of open air. The question is whether the prisoner shall enter, or run away.

The completely obvious fact at this moment is, we trust, that the victim either likes or dislikes some ten measures (M35-M37, M47-M49, M53-M55) of the second half of the *Bach Gavotte*. If he likes them, he may confidently enter. If he dislikes them, he may reasonably run away. The door is still locked. The guards will prevent running until we have made a speech of farewell:

Prisoner in the Pen: When you were a year or so old, Mother stood you up against a chair, placed another chair about three feet away, and urged you to walk to it. At that time you already had an automatic tendency, developed by being led about, to put one foot before the other; but your entire intellectual power had to be summoned to solve successfully the enormous personal problem of keeping centre of gravity above base for a distance of three feet. If Grandma, whom you had seen for the first time that day, had happened to say "Look out," you would probably have toppled. There was no attention or self-control to spare. The entire being was working at the one task.

Progress through music, like walking, consists of proceeding on a horizontal line while maintaining a perpendicular position. One must be able to maintain simultaneous perpendicular and horizontal attention, automatically lifting one's mind over chance obstacles, steering oneself at incidental veerings. Also, enjoyment depends on ability to take in the tonal landscape.

Now, Prisoner in the Pen, here is a page of printed music. It shows perpendicular and horizontal lines. You can make no joyful

progress through it, as a hearer, until you can take in the two sound-phases of musical discourse which are reflected in the typography of it; and, as we might add, (accidentally tumbling on a pleasantry,) until you also can observe the topography of it. In listening to this piece, you, Prisoner in the Pen, may be like an infant. Perpendicular attention may be possible if the horizontal stretch is only three beats; but if any irregularity or surprise occurs, you topple.

If you have any love for music—and you alone know whether you have,—you need not abandon hope. If you enter at that door, you will find no Inferno, even though certain measures of Bach sound to you like it. There is no Dantescan motto in sight, though jokers paste one on the door once or twice per generation. By the way, sometimes these jokers use wonderfully lasting glue.

Excuse the digression. Let's keep to business.

Prisoner in the Pen, you have been shown three things which are as hard to understand as anything which can properly be classed as Music Which Few Understand. If you already like the Bach pieces, that is a great advantage, because it settles, here and now, the basic problem. If you do not like them, but love music, you may expect that understanding and liking will come through hearing more music, perhaps along the lines of our suggestions, perhaps through the development of resources within yourself. There are thousands of persons who, having been profoundly stirred by the *St. Matthew Passion* of Bach, have thereby first been led to an understanding of these little pieces.

Once on a time a certain man, who had been, some years earlier, prisoner in a spiritual pen at a critical enter-or-run-away moment, sent to some friends in Corinth a letter which has been widely printed and often quoted. In that letter he said: "I am become all things to all men; that I may by all means save some." Any fine art, if it could become articulate, might truthfully and benignly say precisely that. The art-lover's task is a corollary of that proposition: to make one of the fine arts all things to one man, himself.

Guards, you are dismissed.

Prisoner in the Pen, the door is now unlocked. Your company has been enjoyable. Talking about music is enjoyable. You have not interrupted. We shall not meet again. The guides *in there* do not bother with small details. Good-bye. If you think that Music may perhaps be the Art that can become all things to you, enter.



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